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THE INDEPENDENT

Saturday 18 April 1998 70p (IR70p) No 3,588

Crisis day for Trimble as Unionists vote

By David McGillick and Anthony Bevis

DAVID TRIMBLE today goes before a deeply divided Ulster Unionist Party in a quest for a vital endorsement of last week's potentially historic new British-Irish agreement.

Sources in both the Trimble camp and within the anti-agreement faction were last night forecasting that he would win the vote at this morning's meeting of the 800-strong Ulster Unionist Council, his party's governing body.

But most observers are also expecting a substantial vote against the agreement, following rejections of the accord by a number of influential elements within Unionism and Orangism.

The Council is the body which in 1995 elected Mr Trimble as leader of the Unionist party following his hardline performance at the first controversial Drumcree Orange march in Co Armagh two months earlier. He goes into today's meeting with both the Order's Grand Lodge and specifically its Co Armagh Lodge opposed to the new deal.

Although the UUP executive endorsed the agreement last Saturday, the days since then have seen growing opposition to

the accord, with few influential voices in the party raised in its defence. Mr Trimble will hope that today's meeting will reveal a hitherto silent majority which is prepared to support it.

John Hunter, a leading barrister in the party, yesterday gave a flavour of the activity within its ranks, describing it as on the verge of ripping itself apart. He said: "You've had members of parliament slamming down phones on constituency chairmen and vice versa. Families are split, lifelong friends are split, council colleagues are split. My great fear is that Unionism has the potential at this time to literally pull itself apart."

Tony Blair yesterday offered Mr Trimble maximum support in the hope of helping him through today's meeting. In interviews clearly designed to reassure waverers, the Prime Minister said there was no prospect of people wedded to the gun and the bomb being released from prison or serving in the proposed Belfast assembly.

He said: "The assembly won't work if you have a situation where you have got people sitting round a table trying to govern, making decisions, some of whom are still wedded to violence."

He added: "If the IRA car-

ry on being committed to violence or, simply, it is a series of tactical gestures, but there is not a genuine break with violence, then there is the provision there for people to be excluded or removed from office."

On the question of prisoners, Mr Blair went on: "It is important that people realise what is being proposed here. There is no question of any remission or early release unless the organisation and the individuals themselves have given up violence and are safe to be let out into the community."

The decision of the Orange Order in Armagh, which covers Mr Trimble's constituency, was particularly unwelcome to his camp. His close identification with the Order has previously been seen as one of his power bases. Armagh Orangemen urged him to reconsider his position on the agreement, adding: "It is with regret that we are unable to recommend its acceptance to the brethren of Co Armagh."

Rival Unionists clashed at the Northern Ireland Forum in Belfast, where Paisleyites kept up a barrage of heckling as Mr Trimble defended the accord. There were cries of "What about the guns?" and "Sell-out".

Hardliners, page 2

Today Antarctica, tomorrow the Thames?



The ice age cometh: A huge ice shelf on the north of the Antarctic has fallen into the sea, new satellite photographs show. Is it global warming? And could it, perversely, turn off the Gulf Stream which warms Britain - and so plunge us into subzero temperatures much of the year? Story, page 2

Children are not fashion accessories, say teachers

By Ben Russell
Education Correspondent

TEACHERS lambasted parents yesterday for treating their offspring as fashion accessories and allowing a generation of spoilt children to run wild.

Members of the second-largest classroom union said there was too little discipline at home and called on parents to back up teachers.

Jacqueline Simpson, a teacher from Leeds, told the National Association of Schoolmasters/Union of Women Teachers conference in Scarborough: "Whatever happened to the culture of an extra wallop at home if you get told off at school. If parents are unable to take responsibility for their offspring, they should be made to, or be punished in some way that hurts."

Delegates backed a motion attacking parents for confusing "good parenting with total support of everything their children do or say".

The call for traditional values comes after repeated complaints about declining standards of behaviour and parenting. Teachers meeting over Easter have heard repeated warnings about verbal or physical assaults on staff by unruly pupils and even by their parents.

David Blunkett, the Secre-

tary of State for Education, told the NASUWT on Thursday that he shared their concerns and promised to be "as tough as nails" on parents who allowed their children to run wild.

Dave Batty, a member of the union's national executive, said: "Parents give children everything they want and don't tell them off. Parenting is not saying 'you can have everything you want and everything you do will be right'. Good parents take responsibility for their children and in doing that they put on restrictions."

Sue Rogers, a teacher from Sheffield, said she had heard of one child who arrived at a primary school only able to speak four words, because his parents had never talked to him. She also described looking after a child whose father was a doctor. "He came to me and he said 'I do not understand what you talk to her about. I never know what to say to her.' Isn't that sad, isn't that tragic? ... Parents have the major responsibility for bringing up their children and schools should not be expected to address their failings."

She attacked parents, claiming: "They come to the classroom and hit members of staff who tell their child off, telling the teacher that their child does not lie or hit other pupils, and won't believe what you tell them."

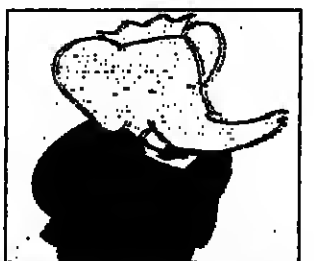
The latest PC ruling: Babar is a 'rhinoist'

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

BABAR the Elephant, a staple bedtime story, has been deemed politically incorrect.

Both King Babar and his wife, Queen Celeste, display Eurocentrism by wearing western clothes and the stories are seen as sexist with Celeste displaying a weak personality and appealingly conventional dress sense, never wearing trousers. The imperialist Babar is also guilty of "internalised racism" towards the Rhino Kingdom.

These are the conclusions of Angela Aujala, a multiculturalism student at Simon Fraser University in Canada. The Rhinos, she explains, "are portrayed as ignorant, gruff, thick-headed and prone to violence, symbolising Eurocentric conceptions of ignorant, uncivilised African savages". But hers is just one contribution to an international academic debate on, supposed anti-social messages emanating from children's favourite elephant. An-



Babar: not so much an elephant as an imperialist

other published attack is titled with staggering hyperbole: "Should We Burn Babar?"

The defence of Babar is being mounted by Kent State University in Ohio. It has the world's largest collection of Babar memorabilia, and its own Babar scholar, Professor Ann Hildebrand. She has written a book on Babar's creators, Jean and Laurent de Brunhoff, and describes Babar as "a wonderful teaching tool for many generations to come".



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Blair wants to bring peace to Middle East

By Anthony Bevis
Political Editor

TONY Blair is pushing for a greater European role in the Middle East peace process, in the hope that it can help to break the current stalemate between Israel and the Palestinians.

On the first leg of his four-day trip to the Middle East, en route to Cairo, the Prime Minister said that it was possible to make progress - "but only if there is a determined sense of will on both sides to do so".

Fresh from his own success in Northern Ireland, Mr Blair said: "It is extremely important to make progress. If we don't, the show stops backwards, there is a bit of a stand-off and a bit of frustration and that poses problems for the whole region."

Indicating the potential for European investment to nill the wheels of diplomacy, Mr Blair - who currently holds the pres-

idency of the European Union - said that he hoped the EU "in tandem and in concert with the Americans can try and move the process forward".

Last night, in Cairo, Mr Blair held talks with President Hosni Mubarak, in which he said that Britain stood "shoulder to shoulder to fight terrorism from wherever it comes" - a direct response to Egyptian claims that Britain is being used as a safe haven foothold for terrorist activity.

Today in Cairo, Mr Blair will launch a new Egyptian-British business council to stimulate investment, now totalling £1bn. One of the executives of the new council will be Sir Peter de la Billière, who commanded British forces in the Gulf war.

Tomorrow, the Blair campaign will move on to Saudi Arabia, where he plans to raise the question of an early release for the two British nurses - Deborah Parry and Lucille McLauchlan.

They were jailed for the murder of Yvonne Guilford, a fellow nurse at a Dhabran hospital in 1996 and there is a hope that their early release can be negotiated.

The Prime Minister's spokesman said yesterday: "If we lower expectations, everything else is a bonus." The clear hope in the Blair party is that progress can be made in moving forward the peace process, and in getting the two nurses out and back to Britain.

The emphasis on British and European investment in the Middle East, and the hope that it can be used as a lever for progress, was underlined by a welter of statistics about investment. In anticipation of the visit to Israel, beginning tomorrow, British sources said that the UK did £2bn-worth of business with Israel each year. It was also said that there were 30,000 British defence jobs dependent on Saudi defence contracts.

INSIDE GUIDE: WEATHER, P2 • CROSSWORDS, TIME OFF P14, 28 • TELEVISION, THE EYE • FULL CONTENTS, P2

JEFF BRIDGES JOHN GOODMAN KILIAN MOORE STEVE BUSCEMI JOHN TURTURRO
★★★★★ "IN A PERFECT WORLD ALL MOVIES WOULD BE MADE BY THE COEN BROTHERS." SAN MATHIAS - EMPIRE
★★★★★ "AS GOOD AS ANYTHING THEY'VE EVER MADE. UNDEBATABLE." JOHN MATHIAS - THE
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A FILM BY EDWIN CREE & JUEL CREE
BIG LEBOWSKI
HER LIFE WAS IN THEIR HANDS. NOW HER TOE IS IN THE MAIL.

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IN TOMORROW'S
INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY

■ I DRINK, THEREFORE I AM
Pual Routledge samples the Karl
Marx pub crawl

■ SIZE MATTERS:
why this is beautiful in the world of
banking

■ SEAFOOD SPECIAL:
Part Two of the
ultimate guide,
by Sophie Grigson
and William Black



IN MONDAY'S
INDEPENDENT

■ STOP WASTING YOUR LIFE:
Gerard Gilbert previews
'turn-off TV week'

■ QUANTUM LEAP:
The computer that would
baffle Einstein

■ WHY DO BUSES ARRIVE
IN THREES?
And other everyday dilemmas

■ COMING UP FROM THE
HOLLYWOOD STREETS:
The Big Issue arrives in LA

■ ADVERTISING WILL EAT ITSELF
The parody of the latest commercials

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Recycled paper made up
41.4% of the raw material for
UK newspapers in the
first half of 1992.



Hardliners to challenge Sinn Fein

By Alan Murdoch
in Dundalk

LEADERS of a hardline republican faction opposed to Sinn Fein's involvement in the Stormont talks have accused the party's leaders of censoring dissent and have vowed to picket the party's annual conference in Dublin today.

Four senior members of the 32 County Sovereignty Committee claimed they had recruited hundreds of members across Ireland. One, Francis Mackey, accused Sinn Fein leaders of abandoning their principles: "We haven't left this movement. They have left the movement," he claimed.

Mr Mackey said the process that led to the Stormont agreement "had not the dynamic to lead to lasting peace". He claimed the outcome meant "British rule in Ireland has been strengthened and recognised as legitimate".

He confirmed that after a group of 30 border members resigned from Sinn Fein late last year, a dissident rumour remained within the party. Six were recently suspended from a north Dublin branch.

"We all have a right to challenge the illegal British claim to part of our country. We all have a right to articulate that view within our party. We have been effectively silenced by this suspension. I reject being called a dissident. I am loyal to the Constitution of Sinn Fein," he said.

The group is headed by Bernadette Sands-McKevitt, the sister of Bobby Sands, the late IRA hunger striker. Speak-

ing in Dundalk on the Irish border, Rory Dougan, the group's press officer, declined to discuss members' involvement in violence or their reported links with another splinter group, the C-IRA, linked to recent explosions.

"I don't speak for the C-IRA, but I can understand their actions," he said. He defended "the right of Irish men and women to oppose British rule in this country".

Mr Dougan made an impassioned appeal to supporters among Sinn Fein and its delegates to "defend your comrades' rights to be heard in the movement. We haven't gone away. We're not going away. We're republicans and we're staying republicans".

He said the 32 County activists represented people with a long republican involvement. A former party director of elections, Mr Dougan said he had several brothers who served terms in British jails and a nephew in the Maze Prison in Belfast.

Asked his view of Sinn Fein leaders Gerry Adams and Martin McGuinness, Mr Dougan said: "I believe they are honourable men, but have taken the party in the wrong direction."

The dissidents will formally discuss the agreement tomorrow and announce their "definitive" view on Wednesday.

Sinn Fein vice president Pat Doherty predicted yesterday that the party would not hold a vote on the agreement at the annual conference.

But Sinn Fein chairman Michael McLaughlin said later that delegates could themselves decide to give their verdict this weekend.



Key location: Selling the news in Belfast next to the Europa Hotel where David Trimble speaks today. Photograph: John Voos

Unionist council poised for crucial vote

By David McKitterick
Ireland Correspondent

THE ULSTER Unionist Council, which will today make a decision crucial to the peace process, is such a far-flung and nebulous entity that even many party apparatchiks are uncertain how its membership is made up.

This uncertainty extends to its voting intentions. For at key points party members and close observers have failed to predict its decisions. For example, in

September 1992 when just about everyone thought it would elect John Taylor as party leader, delegates plumped instead for the most hardline candidate, David Trimble, who will today ask them for endorsement of the new British-Irish agreement.

Although both pro-agreement and anti-agreement camps were yesterday forecasting a majority for Mr Trimble, both will be holding their breaths when the result of the vote is announced.

The agreement is by any standards a radical new departure, while the council is famously conservative. Its age profile seems unpromising for innovation: well over half are of pensionable age, with perhaps one-quarter in their seventies.

In addition to delegates from each Westminster constituency association, it includes representatives from affiliated bodies which are entitled to send more than 200 representa-

tatives. The most important of these is the Orange Order, which can send up to 122. Many other delegates are also members of the Order. Ex-officio members of the council who may vote include sitting and former MPs.

Although the agreement was endorsed by the party executive by a two-thirds majority, it was rejected during the week by the Orange Order, the Young Unionists and the Queen's University Unionists.

Antarctic ice-shelf breaks free

By Charles Arthur
Science and Technology Editor

NEW satellite pictures have shown that a huge section of a gigantic Antarctic ice shelf has broken away - confirming the predictions of British experts who warned months ago that it was under threat.

Pictures taken by an orbiting satellite have captured successive images from February and March this year - the Antarctic summer - showing the loss of a chunk 45 kilometres long and five kilometres across from the Larsen B ice

shelf on the eastern Antarctic peninsula coast.

At worst, it could be the prelude to massive climatic change for Britain that would make the Easter floods of last weekend seem mild. If the Antarctic ice pack begins to break up it could halt the Gulf Stream - the northwards ocean flow that keeps Britain comparatively warm for its latitude - and give us the freezing winters experienced in Newfoundland off the eastern Canadian seaboard, which lies at about the same latitude as Britain.

But yesterday scientists at the British Antarctic Survey (BAS) emphasised that the collapse could indicate nothing more significant than a little local trouble in one small part of the continent.

"This latest finding does not, of itself, mean a change in sea levels or global ocean circulation," said David Vaughan, a glaciologist. That is because ice shelves themselves are floating. However, the ice shelves may be the bulwark against the ice on land melting. Without them, sea levels might rise.

"The big question is what inflated the climate warming on the peninsula itself," Mr Vaughan said. "We can't say at the moment. But whatever caused it is being made stronger by regional effects."

The new data does show though that the shelf is under threat of breaking away into the sea and melting. "It's like a bridge - if you keep taking a couple of bricks away then eventually it will collapse."

The Larsen B is the biggest ice shelf threatened by this warming. Since the 1940s, the climate of the Antarctic penin-

sula has grown 2.5°C warmer, causing the ice shelves to start melting. The rate of warming is several times greater than the world average - but nobody knows why.

The Larsen B ice shelf is huge by human standards - about 12,000 square kilometres - but tiny in the context of the entire Antarctic continent.

But the loss of ice could be significant. Ted Sambors, an American researcher who analysed the pictures from the satellite, said: "The total size of the Larsen B is more than all the previous ice that has been

lost from Antarctic ice sheets in the past two decades."

"The warming trend appears to be related to a reduction in sea ice. The question now is what is causing the reduction. At this point, we do not have enough evidence to find a smoking gun."

But he thinks the data may indicate a worrying trend. "Ice shelves appear to be good bell-weather for climatic change, since they respond to change within decades, rather than the years or centuries sometimes typical of other climate systems."

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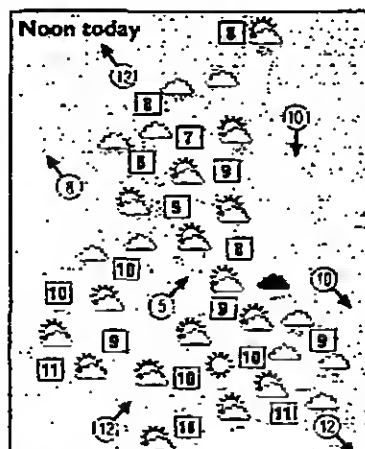
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WEATHER



Western Scotland will be cloudy with outbreaks of light rain and drizzle, but the east will be mostly dry with sunny breaks, especially away from North Sea coasts. Northern Ireland will see some sunny breaks but there will be a lot of cloud around and this may give a little light rain in places. England and Wales will have a mix of sunny breaks and showers, but most of the showers will be in Kent and East Angles with many other parts staying dry.

Outlook for the next few days
Sunday will be wet everywhere, although the heaviest of the rain will be in southern areas during the afternoon with most other parts seeing the rain at least once. It will be mild on Sunday and it will continue to become milder through the coming week. Monday and Tuesday will be unsettled with rain before we see a pleasant Wednesday and Thursday with mainly dry weather and plenty of sunshine.

British Isles weather

Most recent available figures at noon local time.

Abertillery	C 8.4	Guernsey	C 7.4
Anglesey	F 9.4	Isle of Man	C 8.4
Ayr	F 10.5	Jersey	C 8.4
Belfast	F 10.5	Isles of Scilly	F 9.4
Birmingham	C 8.4	London	C 8.4
Blackpool	C 9.4	Manchester	C 8.4
Bournemouth	C 9.4	Newcastle	C 8.4
Brighton	C 10.5	Nottingham	C 8.4
Cardiff	F 9.4	Sheffield	C 8.4
Cardiff	F 11.2	Southampton	C 8.4
Carlisle	F 9.4	Stirling	C 8.4
Donner	C 7.4	Swansea	C 8.4
Durham	F 10.5	Southend	C 8.4
Edinburgh	C 8.4	Stoke	C 8.4
Exeter	F 12.5	Sturminster	C 8.4
Glasgow	C 10.5	York	C 8.4

Air quality

Yesterday's readings

London	Good	SO ₂	Good
S. England	Good	NO ₂	Good
Wales	Good	NO ₂	Good
C. England	Good	NO ₂	Good
N. England	Good	NO ₂	Good
Scotland	Good	NO ₂	Good
N. Ireland	Good	NO ₂	Good

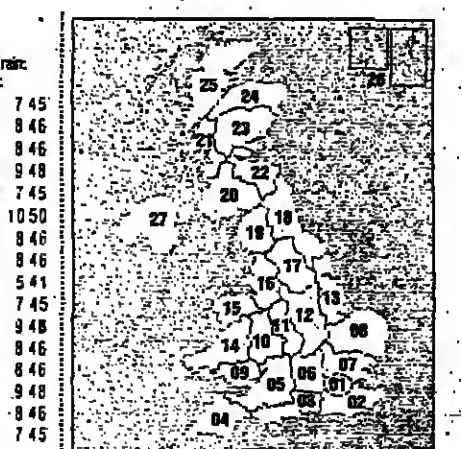
Out and about with AA Roadwatch

Call 0336 401777 for the latest local and national traffic news. Source: The Automobile Association. Calls charged at 50p per min. at all times (inc VAT).

World weather

Most recent available figures at noon local time.

Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5
Abertillery	C 2.7	Algeria	C 10.5



INDEPENDENT Weatherline

For the latest forecasts call 0891 55009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Greater than 1000hPa. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

High tides	AM	HT	PM	HT
London	06:25	6.6	18:40	6.6
Liverpool	03:35	8.4	15:57	8.0
Aberdeen	11:36	11.1	23:56	10.8
Hull (Albert Dock)	10:51	7.2	22:22	7.4
Bournemouth	05:02	3.0	17:17	2.9
Dun Laoghaire	04:18	3.5	17:01	3.4

Lighting-up times

For the latest forecasts call 0891 55009 followed by the two digits for your area indicated by the above map. Greater than 1000hPa. Calls charged at 50p per min at all times (inc VAT).

Lighting-up times	Sun & moon
Belfast	06:32 to 6:13
Birmingham	06:11 to 6:02
Bristol	06:12 to 6:03
Cardiff	06:12 to 6:03
Edinburgh	06:12 to 6:03
Glasgow	06:12 to 6:03
London	06:12 to 6:03
Manchester	06:12 to 6:03
Newcastle	06:12 to 6:03
Nottingham	06:12 to 6:03

Mandy Allwood to dig up octuplets

MANDY Allwood has applied to disinter her octuplets and re-bury them elsewhere following a row with cemetery authorities over the babies' grave.

Ms Allwood, who lost the children in a series of miscarriages in October 1996, is angry over Lambeth Council's refusal to allow her to use the words "mummy" and "daddy" on the tomb. As a result, there is still no tombstone and Ms Allwood and her partner, Paul Hudson, have applied to remove their children from West Norwood Cemetery in south-east London. Instead, the couple want to re-bury the octuplets in a cemetery run by a local authority with a more relaxed policy.

Ms Allwood's spokesman Kizzi Nkwocha said: "They want to write on their headstone what comes naturally to them, not what some pencil-pushing bureaucrats says. It should be allowed in a dignified way. It is something intensely personal."

Ms Allwood's octuplets were stillborn in the 19th week of her pregnancy which had been the focus of international headlines. The couple was reported to have been paid up to £50,000 by the media for their story.

Mr Nkwocha said an application to disinter the bodies was currently with Lambeth's operational services department and he expected a response in the next few weeks.

Clapton leads addicts to the crossroads

By Phil Davison
in Antigua

ERIC CLAPTON loves Antigua. He has lived on the Caribbean island, on and off, for the past 15 years, the last 10 of them while "clean" of drugs and alcohol. The previous five were not so good, the wild final years of his decline towards the "rock bottom" of drug and alcohol addiction.

Antiguans stuck with him through the bad times, helping him when he was down, and respected his privacy when he returned from detox and needed his space. Now the guitar legend is giving something back to the island.

In a couple of months, Clapton will open the \$5m state-of-the-art Crossroads Rehabilitation Centre, the island's first treatment centre for addicts, on this secluded bay. It will treat mainly North Americans and Europeans, for \$9,000 (almost £6,000) a month, possibly including some of Clapton's friends, but reserve 12 of its 36 beds to help local Antiguan addicts for nothing.

The singer, who has not touched alcohol or drugs in 10 years, will visit the clinic regularly to share his own story during counselling sessions. In charge will be Toronto-born former nurse Anne Vance, who used to run the renowned Betty Ford rehab clinic in Palm Springs, California.

It will be "a Robin Hood-type thing", the taciturn singer-guitarist said in a rare recent interview on CNN's *Larry King Live*, which he gave specifically to publicise and seek funding for what had previously been a secretive venture. "I am primarily doing it for people who have no money that need treatment."

He is setting up foundations in the US and Britain which will organise concerts and other fund-raising events to subsidise the Antiguan patients.

Like much of the Caribbean, Antigua is increasingly plagued by serious drug addiction problems, mostly involving crack cocaine. After US anti-narcotics agents squeezed traditional Colombian cartel smuggling routes through Mexico, the Colombians took to moving their wares by boat through Caribbean islands, often paying local smugglers in cocaine rather than cash.

"I have been in a recovery programme for the past 10 years," Clapton told reporters here during a recent visit to watch construction of the centre before starting a US tour. "I've had a long career of drink-



Clean hand: Clapton, who has not touched drink or drugs for 10 years, wants to help the people of Antigua after they helped him through the bad times

ing and drugging and I have received treatment in rehabilitation centres in America."

The singer started taking drugs in London at the age of 15. "There was everything a man could want and yet every night I would want to kill myself and I wanted to die," he said in the CNN interview.

"Internally I was falling to pieces... I had a grand mal seizure. Scared the living daylights out of me. Woke up in the hospital."

More than 120 local workers toiled feverishly yesterday to complete the sprawling, hurricane-proof Crossroads Centre, named after one of the guitarist's hit records, by July. Its first patients will move in by September, living two to a room

to prevent feelings of isolation, starting with detoxification then working on the 12-step principles of Alcoholics Anonymous.

The fittings are luxurious, the view past the swimming pool and across the sparkling turquoise water, to where Clapton has a luxury home at Indian Creek, spectacular. A few hundred yards along an unpaved road lie the ruins of Britain's first Antiguan settlement at Bridgetown. A little further on is the exclusive Mill Reef Club, where Jackie Onassis used to be among the winter residents.

"Eric loves it here because he can drive around the island alone in his old pick-up truck and no one bothers him. He just seems to blend in,"

said Hans Smit, a Dutch-born Antigua businessman and friend, whose altruistic Hourglass Foundation helped get the project under way four years ago, finding the land and liaising with the Antiguan government.

"He'll walk in here, maybe with a couple of friends, sit outside and order his favourite mineral water," said Everett "Mengalin" Francis, a bartender at Clapton's favourite restaurant, the Big Banana in the capital, St John's. "The locals don't bother him and they don't point him out to the cruise ship visitors."

A big American corporation, Transitional Hospitals Corp, was initially to build the centre but had a disagreement with the singer over

how it should function.

"They wanted it to be for very wealthy people. Eric saw it as much more angled towards helping Antiguanians," said Mr Smit. "It's very close to his heart."

Two years ago, Clapton met Anne Vance, who had left the Betty Ford Clinic and was working with the European Association for Treatment of Addicts (EATA), while he was doing volunteer work at a treatment centre in London. They decided to drop the American corporation and go it alone, the singer putting up the first \$5m with the new US and British foundations to raise future funds.

"We won't just treat the addiction," Ms Vance told *The Independent*.

"We want to improve the body, mind and spirit with relaxation techniques, massage, acupuncture, nutrition classes."

"When I first met Eric, I didn't recognise him. Then he told me it was his dream to help Antiguanians. This is very important to him. He told me I want to give back what recovery has given to me, a chance to live again."

"He likes to do his work invisibly. He didn't want to sacrifice his privacy. He kept this top secret for the first couple of years but he had to go public with it for the sake of future funding. He's a very caring person. It's a joy to work with someone who's doing this from the heart."

Laser heart surgery doubts

By Jeremy Laurance
Health Editor

DOCTORS in the United States were criticised yesterday for creating false hope in desperately ill patients by suggesting a laser gun that drills holes in the heart could offer a life-saving alternative to heart transplants.

With up to half of patients dying before they can get a heart transplant because of the shortage of donor organs, US researchers claim the technique of punching up to 50 holes in the wall of the heart to improve blood flow to oxygen-starved muscle could save lives.

Dr Valluvan Jeevanandam, surgical director of the Heart Transplantation Program at Temple University Hospital, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, said: "This promising new therapy offers an alternative for patients with severe chest pain who may need a heart transplant."

Results of the research were presented at a meeting of the International Society for Heart and Lung Transplantation in Chicago, Illinois.

British specialists said the technique was still undergoing trials and would never help more than a small percentage of heart transplant patients, most of whom suffer from heart failure, which is a dysfunction of the pumping action of the heart. Candidates for the laser are mainly patients with ischaemic heart disease.

A trial of the technique, known as transmyocardial revascularisation, has been completed on 190 patients from Papworth hospital, Cambridge, using the heart laser at the nearby Bupa hospital, and follow-up results are due next year. About 20 patients have also been treated at the Royal Brompton hospital, London.

Early indications are that the treatment is effective in most patients but the improvement wears off after one to two years.

Neil Moat, cardiovascular surgeon at the Royal Brompton, said: "Like a lot of new treatments it works to some extent but it needs modifying. I cannot see it having a major impact on the heart transplant waiting list."

A dogged lawyer's lawyer lost in the political jungle

IN THE NEWS

KENNETH STARR

THE MAN widely regarded as President Bill Clinton's nemesis yesterday intoned a warning that resounded all around Washington. "The end," Kenneth Starr told a gaggle of reporters on the steps of the US Court House, "is not in sight."

Thus did Mr Starr, independent prosecutor appointed four years ago to investigate charges of criminal wrongdoing by Mr Clinton, dash hopes that a judicial inquiry was near conclusion.

Mr Starr, 51, a high-flying lawyer with muted Republican credentials, has been elevated to villain-in-chief by the Clinton camp. When Hillary spoke three months ago of the "vast right-wing conspiracy" tout to "get" her husband, Mr Starr was one of the first she named.

Since he was named by the Attorney-General, Janet Reno, to take over the investigation, he has expanded his brief to include five inquiries and spent \$30m (£18m) of taxpayers' money. A technical investigation into whether Mr Clinton and/or his wife broke the law in relation to the Whitewater land deal in mid-Eighties Arkansas now encompasses charges that Mrs Clinton wrongly dismissed employees of the White House travel office, that the White House misused FBI files, that Mr Clinton "bought" the silence of former employees by resettling them in private-sector jobs, and finally - that Mr Clinton perjured himself and suborned perjury after an alleged affair



Kenneth Starr: Accused of orchestrating a right-wing plot against the Clintons

WORK AND FAMILY

"He's a strong family man, very involved in his church and community. On the other hand, he's capable of doing more work, more conscientiously, than anyone I know." Theodore Olson, friend and former colleague of Kenneth Starr.

BAD GUY

"The President privately sees that independent counsel Kenneth Starr is 'a very bad guy' and 'dangerous'. There's genuine concern, even if it weren't him in the cross hairs... that Ken Starr represents a danger in American life." Bob Woodward, Washington Post.

with a White House trainee.

Mr Starr's pursuit of this last inquiry, the Monica Lewinsky affair, has drawn attention to prosecutorial methods described by his detractors as "bullying" and "psychological torture". He authorised the "wiring" of Ms Lewinsky's confidante, Linda Tripp, to try to record incriminating details of her relationship with Mr Clinton, summonsed Ms Lewinsky's tearful mother to testify against her daughter, and subpoenaed receipts of Ms Lewinsky's purchases from Washington bookshops.

For those looking for evidence of Mr Starr's crusading attitude, there is also Susan McDougal, a key witness in the Whitewater affair, who has been in prison a year for contempt because she refused to testify against the Clintons.

Among Washington Democrats and sympathetic journalists, the demonisation of Mr Starr is well advanced. Common wisdom is that he is driven by ideology and hatred of the Clintons. They note his previous posts: aide to President Reagan's first attorney-general, and solicitor-general for President Bush's Justice Department. Most recently, they cite a job offer from Pepperdine University, California, one of whose chief benefactors, the right-winger Richard Scaife, who commissioned articles from anti-Clinton reporters.

This week, stung by accusations that the six-month old job offer - as dean of the university's faculties of law and public policy - represented a conflict of interest and could jeopardise his job as inde-

pendent prosecutor, Mr Starr made public his letter declining the post. This clumsy public-relations effort by Mr Starr, however, pointed up another side to his character and one cited by those of his defenders who dare to put their heads above the parapet.

Mr Starr, they say, is a lawyer's lawyer, dogged, perhaps obsessive in his desire to see the law upheld (by everyone). From the strictly legal point of view, they say - and few disagree - he has barely put a foot wrong. Politically, though, it is another story. If he had set out to convince the nation he was on a right-wing crusade against the President, one reporter said, he could "hardly have outdone his own series of missteps and embarrassing revelations."

— Mary Dejevsky, Washington

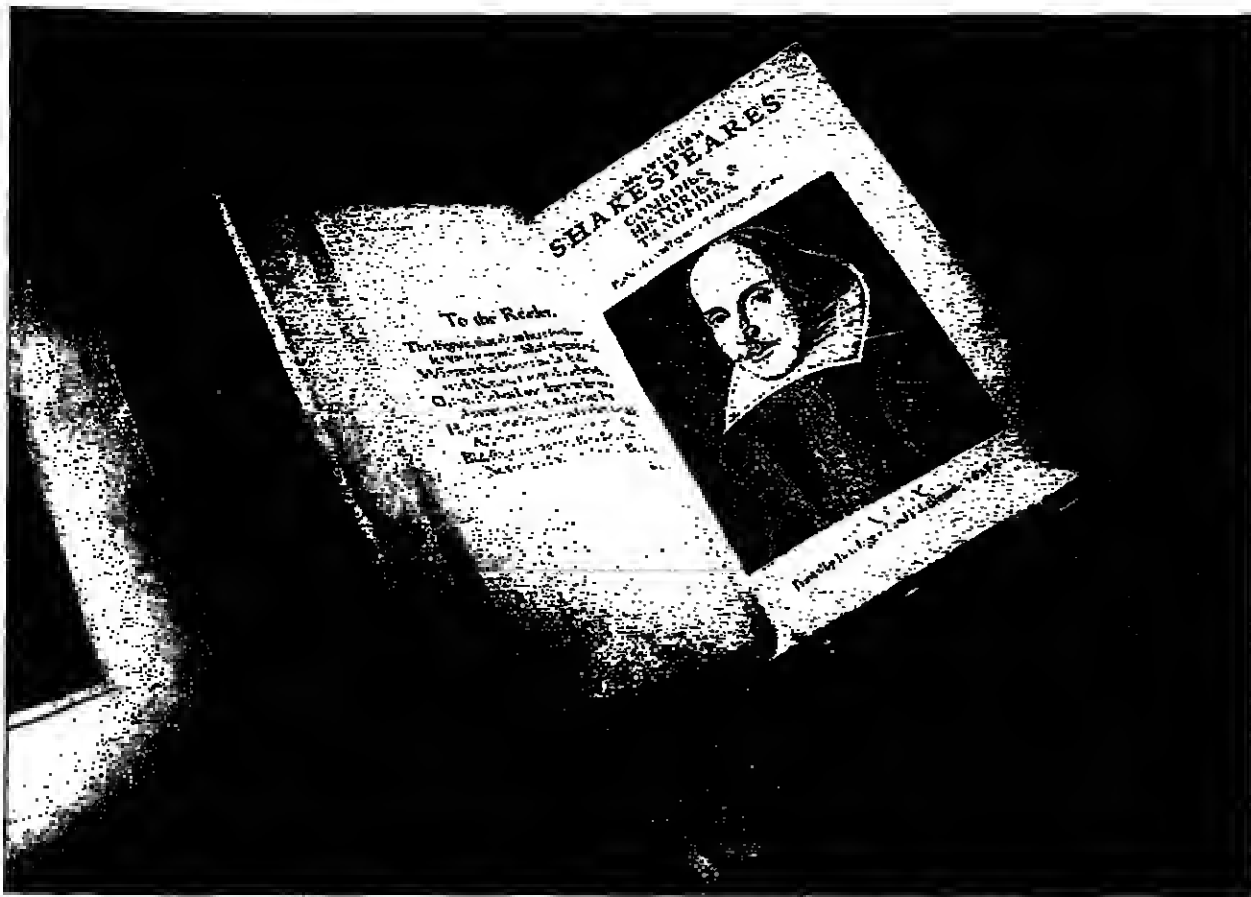
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Heritage showcase: Shakespeare's First Folio of 1623, one of the British Library's greatest treasures, being put in place for the opening on Tuesday 21 April of the new exhibition galleries at St Pancras, London. Photograph: Peter Macdarmid

Frustration for unions in bid for recognition

By Barrie Clement
Labour Editor

TUC leader John Monks has asked for an urgent meeting with the Prime Minister amid growing frustration among workers' leaders over plans for a law on union recognition.

Unless Tony Blair this week-end gives some indication that he is prepared to meet Mr Monks and reveal the Government's intentions, some union "barons" are minded to vent their anger publicly and take advantage of growing unease on the Government's backbenches.

A group of union general secretaries, which has been involved in meetings with ministers, will decide their strategy on Monday before an emergency session of the TUC's ruling general council.

One senior source suggest-

ed yesterday that at least one member of the Government had actively sought to prevent agreement between the TUC and CBI - "the social partners" - on how the law would operate. He said that negotiations between Congress House officials and their counterparts at the CBI had come to an abrupt end last autumn and that renewed attempts to come to an accommodation ended suddenly three weeks ago. The insider believed a ministerial *eminentia grise* had been at work, persuading employers that there was no need to achieve a consensus.

Some union leaders want a "round table discussion" on recognition so that competing interests can thrash out a consensus on the basis of detailed information.

The source, who had been present at the meetings in

Whitehall, said senior union officials were in a "state of amazement" about how the whole process had been conducted. The last formal discussion with Mr Blair took place on 18 December. Subsequent meetings with the Prime Minister had addressed other issues.

Thus far there have been a series of bilateral meetings involving the TUC, the CBI, the Department of Trade and Industry and Number Ten. However it is known that Mr Blair will make the final decision and on Monday the TUC will seek clarification of his views.

One senior union figure said: "Downing Street keep moving the goalposts. They seem to be treating it as a game. It is very amateurish, although it might suit certain people in the Government to play it that way." Other union general secretaries, including John Ed-

monds of the GMB general union, will counsel caution on Monday ahead of a meeting with Margaret Beckett, President of the Board of Trade, later next week, and a likely session with the Prime Minister, possibly the week after.

One of the key debates is over the rules governing ballots on recognition. The CBI contends that it should only be granted when it has been backed by a majority of the whole workforce, but the TUC argues that it should only require a majority of those voting.

Mr Edmonds is expected to attempt to restrain his more impatient colleagues in a speech to the Scottish TUC on Tuesday. He will point to the fact that the White Paper "Fairness at Work" will deliver on other pledges in Labour's pre-election manifesto.

Index

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Blair attacks 'silly' labelling of female MPs

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

NEW Labour women, humiliated by the less-than-flattering label "Blair's Babes", are suffering from sexist stereotyping, the Prime Minister said yesterday.

In an interview for Radio 4's *Woman's Hour* programme, Tony Blair dismissed criticism of the new intake of MPs for being too conformist as "just silly" and claimed that it would never have been levelled at men.

His remarks followed comments earlier this month by the Speaker of the House of Commons, Betty Boothroyd, who had suggested that some new Labour MPs were "too young" and that such behaviour would not win them promotion.

The Secretary of State for International Development, Clare Short, subsequently said she had found some Tory backbenchers in the last Parliament "creaky" and was surprised to

find some Labour members now behaving in a similar way.

The "Blair Babes" title - invented by a headline writer when Labour's 101 women MPs posed together for a picture just after the May election - was "insulting" and "incredibly patronising", the Prime Minister said.

On the whole, the women were broadly supportive of the Government, he said, but this was "mainly because a lot of them are younger, they are from my generation."

"For years they lived in a Labour Party that protested about this, that and the next thing but couldn't for the life of it ever win power or govern sensibly. They've now got a Labour Party that does that, they basically support it and people call them toddlers. Well it's just silly," he said.

Bewitching Baebes excommunicated from 'Songs Of Praise'

By David Lister
Arts News Editor

THE BBC'S *Songs Of Praise* has banned the top-selling, all-female ensemble The Mediaeval Baebes after reports that the 12-strong group has engaged in white witchcraft.

The Mediaeval Baebes were to have pre-recorded a performance for the programme at St George's Church, Salisbury, this weekend for transmission on 26 April.

Now the producer of *Songs Of Praise*, Jeremy Kime, has booked a group of choirboys instead. Les Malloy, who acts for The Mediaeval Baebes concerning TV and radio appearances, said yesterday: "Jeremy Kime said to me he had seen reports about white witchcraft and didn't think it would be good publicity for a religious programme to be connected with it. I was very disappointed."

But a spokeswoman for the

programme said yesterday:

"The Mediaeval Baebes were one of a number of groups approached about possible *Songs Of Praise* recordings. But it was felt that parts of their repertoire in Latin and Italian weren't conducive to the programme. It wasn't particularly to do with witchcraft."

The programme has an audience of over 5 million, and yesterday a spokesman for the group said: "The group has done the church great service by introducing a wide public to a glorious body of sacred works. Now, it appears that the church's prime TV outlet has made a base and baseless decision to shun The Mediaeval Baebes."

The group, who appear in stinky, white dresses as part of their TV and stage act, record 14th-century religious and secular music.

Their debut album, *Salva Nox*, entered the classical album charts at number 2 last November, and has not been

out of the top five since.

The ensemble, which is drawn from several countries including the UK, are accomplished performers of choral music, but also owe their rapid fame to good looks and a calculated PR campaign in which they took delight in describing themselves with such phrases as "shameless harlots", "hard-core, full-on, Anglo-Saxon acid-mead mistresses of the Middle Ages music scene", and the girls who "put the E into Early Music".

Three of the Baebes are white witches. One of the Baebes, Rachel Van Asch, not a white witch herself, but interested in quantum physics and known as Quantum Baebe, said yesterday: "We are all interested in strange forces. Some of the Baebes do have an interest in healing and divination."

"There's nothing wrong with white witchcraft. We believe in tolerance and open-mindedness."



White-out: The Mediaeval Baebes, who style themselves as 'shameless harlots' and 'hard-core, full-on, Anglo-Saxon acid-mead mistresses', have been banned from *Songs Of Praise* over reports of their enthusiasm for white witchcraft

Photograph: Rev Features

Mandelson admits slip-up in spinning

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

LABOUR'S spin-doctors "let the side down" in allowing Bernie Ecclestone's £1m donation to become a big story in the press, Peter Mandelson says this weekend.

In an apparent admission that the arch spin-doctor himself had made a rare slip-up, he suggested that Labour spokespeople had not acted quickly enough. On the other hand, his words could also be read as criticism of the press colleagues of the minister without portfolio.

In a documentary on Tony Blair's first year in power, Mr Mandelson worried that his party's famous spin-doctors did not work hard enough to keep the furore off the front pages. In the same programme, Channel 4's *Blair's Year* which will be shown tomorrow evening, frictions between Mr Mandelson and the Deputy Prime Minister became apparent. Mr Prescott admitted that the spin-doctors' role was leading to "tensions".

Asked about the Ecclestone affair, when the party was forced to return a donation after the government bowed to lobbying by the Formula One boss over a ban on tobacco sponsorship, Mr Mandelson suggested Labour spokesmen had not acted quickly enough.

"I think in a very real sense your celebrated spin-doctors, your media managers and all these people, in a sense we let the side down," he said.

Because the party had to consult Lord Neill, the chairman of the Committee on Standards in Public Life, and to ask

Mr Ecclestone whether he was willing to have his donation disclosed, the process had been slow, he suggested. In the meantime, the press had begun to feel that something was being held back from them.

In the film, Mr Prescott, said that at first Labour had operated as it had in opposition. "Make no mistake, this is creating certain problems. Spin-doctoring is about putting a political message to what might be a departmental one, and that's created tensions," he said.

John Monks, general secretary of the Trades Union Congress, used the documentary to attack Labour's attempts to weaken its links with the unions. The party had turned to business donors instead but they tended to demand more in return, he said. The unions have donated £100m to Labour since 1979, but now gives less than half Labour's annual income.

"We did note with some wry amusement that if you get involved with the business community... they want something for their money. I think it arouses a lot more controversy than trade union money to the Labour Party ever did," he said.

The programme also highlighted an apparent difference between Mr Prescott and Robin Cook over proportional representation, with differing interpretations of Tony Blair's comment that he was "not persuaded" of the need for change. The Foreign Secretary suggested Mr Blair had a positive attitude to PR, while Mr Prescott commented: "The Prime Minister said he's against proportional representation."

DAILY POEM

From 'The Ballad of Reading Gaol'

By Oscar Wilde

With sudden shock the prison-clock
Smote on the shivering air,
And from all the gaol rose up a wail
Of impotent despair.
Like the sound that frightened marshes hear
From some leper in his lair.

And as one sees most fearful things
In the crystal of a dream,
We saw the greasy hangman rope
Hooked to the blackened beam,
And heard the prayer the hangman's snare
Strangled had a dream.

And all the woe that moved him so
That he gave that bitter cry,
And the wild regrets, and the bloody sweats,
None knew so well as I:
For he who lives more lives than one
More deaths than one must die.

This is our final selection from the expanded edition of the Penguin Classics anthology *Poetry of the 1890s* (Penguin, £8.99), edited by R. K. R. Thornton and Marion Thain. Wilde published his Ballad in 1898, the year after his release.

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Ripper fans take stab at naming evil Jack

By Kim Sengupta

THE VENUE is the Friendly Hotel in the suburb of Bowthorpe, in peaceful Norwich. Ninety men and women were discussing murder, dismemberment, Freemasonry and the royal family. Among those due to be taking part was Jeremy Beadle.

To outsiders it may seem surreal but for delegates at the seminar it is deadly serious: after three days of wading through bodies, gore and entanglements, they hope to be closer to identifying Jack The Ripper. In the process, it is predicted, backs will be stabbed, Ripperology reputations slashed to bits and red herrings netted and disposed of. Others attending will be Donald Rumbelow, author of *The Complete Jack The Ripper*, and Nick Warren, editor of the magazine *Ripperama*, through which enthusiasts can keep abreast of sightings of the latest theories for £6 a year. Rosemarie Howell, an organiser of the conference, says: "This is just the tip of the iceberg. There are a lot of people fascinated by the subject; there is huge worldwide interest in Jack The Ripper."

Those attending are a cross-section of ages and sexes. Some are said to be embarrassed about their obsession and can only be frank among kindred spirits. The Ripper is believed to have committed five murders between August and November 1888 in the East End of London. The victims, prostitutes, had their throats slashed and were mutilated.

Suspects and motives were thrown up, ranging from demented reformers who wanted to highlight deprivation in the slums of the capital, to a conspiracy embracing the government, Freemasons and the then royal physician.

This scenario, presented by Stephen Knight in his book *Jack The Ripper: The Final Solution*, involved Queen Victoria's grandson, Albert, heir-presumptive to the throne, fathering a child by a Catholic commoner. Four prostitutes found out and tried to blackmail the government.



The Duke of Clarence, another possible Ripper candidate. Photograph: Hulton Getty

The Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, turned to the royal physician and fellow Mason Sir William Gull, who killed the blackmailers, a fifth victim being mistaken identity. The mutilations carried out were according to Masonic rituals. The Salisbury-Gull conspiracy theory has been attacked by other experts, including Mr Rumbelow and Donald McCormick. Rival claimants to the Jack The Ripper title include another

member of the royal family, the Duke of Clarence, Aaron Kosminski, a Polish Jew, and an upholsterer, James Kelly, both of whom got syphilis from prostitutes. In 1993 the author Shirley Harrison said she had found the diaries of the Ripper, who was an arsenic-addicted Liverpool cotton merchant called James Maybrick. It was "the completely spontaneous outpouring of someone going through hell," Brian May-

brick, a descendant of the alleged Ripper, said: "We always knew James Maybrick was the black sheep of the family, but we never knew it was anything like this." He need not have worried overmuch: the diaries were dismissed as a hoax. So the search goes on. Maybrick may not have been The Ripper but those at Norwich will appreciate the family motto he adopted: *Tempus omnia revelat* - Time reveals all.

Persistent Paxman shortlisted

TELEVISION interviewer Jeremy Paxman's grilling of a Government minister in which he asked the same question 14 times has been shortlisted for a major award, it emerged yesterday.

The broadcaster repeatedly pressed Michael Howard, Home Secretary at the time, on BBC2's *Newsnight*.

The interview has now been nominated in the interview of the year category for the Royal Television Society's Television, Sports and Journalism Awards.

It is up against two other BBC entries: David Dimbleby's pre-election *Panorama* interview with Tony Blair and John Humphrys' quizzing of the Prime Minister in *On The Record* about the furor surrounding tobacco advertising in Grand Prix racing.

The Paxman interview was even praised by Chris Smith, the Secretary of State for Culture, whose department is responsible for media matters, saying the presenter was "at his quizzical best" during the interview.

In the television journalist of the year award category, BBC reporters Denis Murray and Beo Brown have made the shortlist, along with ITN's Michael Brunsom.

For the news event award ITN, BBC and Sky News have been nominated for their coverage of the death of Diana, Princess of Wales.

Ewen Murray and Bruce Critchley (BSkyB), Richie Benaud (BBC) and Murray Walker and Martin Brundle (MACH 1 for ITV network) have been selected in the sports commentator category.

The Awards ceremony takes place on 14 May.

Child killer seeks safety in new unit

By Ian Burrell

CHILD KILLER Sidney Cooke has been moved out of the London police station where he has been held since his release from prison ten days ago, Scotland Yard said yesterday.

A spokesman said he was "no longer the responsibility of the Metropolitan police service". He refused to say where Cooke had been taken, but sources indicated he would be held by another police force for the time being.

The paedophile has asked to be held in a secure unit for his own protection, like another member of his child abuse gang, Robert Oliver, who is staying at a private unit in Milton Keynes, which said yesterday it would not be taking Cooke as well.

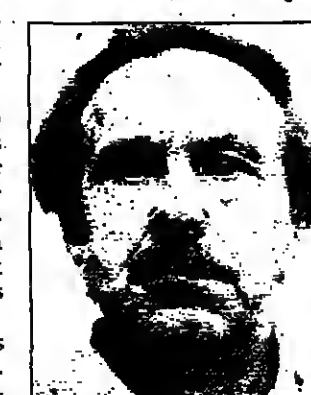
Cooke, who celebrates his 71st birthday today, was released on 6 April after serving nine years of a 16-year term for the manslaughter of teenage runaway Jason Swift.

When the Met took Cooke into one of their stations - thought to be Leman Street in east London - they said he would be held there until "suitable long-term" accommodation could be found. They emphasised that a police station was not seen as suitable.

But crowds of protesters have gathered outside the Leman Street station, which is used as a base for traffic wardens and is close to a primary school. A sign saying "paedophile protector" was hung over the station's nameplate and pro-

testers promised to remain until Cooke was moved. One of the protesters, mother Lisa Ayris, 38, said: "We don't just want him out of here... I would like to see him locked up again."

Last week Carlton TV's *London Today* programme claimed that a cell block at Cheshunt police station in Hertfordshire, which is just



Cooke: moved out of London police station

within the Met's area, was being refurbished, possibly to hold Cooke. The Met police then issued a denial that there were any plans to move him.

Yesterday Paul Cavadinio, director of the Penal Reform Consortium, said he hoped that Cooke had been moved to a secure hospital. "He needs someone where secure and supervised in order to protect the public and to protect him from vigilante attacks," he said. But as a free man, Cooke is entitled to ignore police advice and demand to go wherever he likes, although he would be under surveillance.

Lottery show 'faces axe'

By Paul McCann

Media Editor

THE BBC faces the embarrassment of radically revamping its controversial National Lottery scratchcard show after poor ratings and a fall in scratchcard sales.

The BBC attracted criticism from MPs and the culture, media and sport select committee chairman Gerald Kaufman for appearing to encourage scratchcard sales when it unveiled its *Big Ticker* show. To get on the show or to play at home the public needed to buy a TV Dreams scratchcard.

Now there are persistent rumours emerging from the Corporation that the format of the show is to be changed and that some executives would even like to see it axed. A spokeswoman said yesterday: "We don't have any plans to axe the show. But it is a live show and we are always looking at the format of it to see what works."

Last week's show, the third *Big Ticker*, attracted an audience of 7.2m viewers, well down on the old-style programme's heyday when it regularly attracted audiences over 10m.

The BBC and Camelot have suffered an onslaught of bad publicity over the *Big Ticker*. This week it was discovered that scratchcard sales had actually fallen to their lowest ever despite the show and advertising campaign.

There have also been stories of the studio audience for the show walking out bored because of the length of the recording, making the cameras move around the remaining audience so the studio will look full on screen.

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Snow surgery is cure for doctor's peak obsession

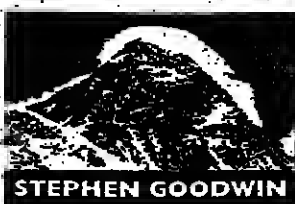
DR SUNDEEP had professional duties again this morning, filling three more slits in my fingers with Super Glue and then seeking out a couple of Sherpas with chesty coughs to whom he wanted to lend a stethoscope. Aged 28, Sundeep Dhillon aims to become the youngest person to stand on the highest summit on each of the seven continents. Everest will complete his tally. But he wears this personal ambition lightly and as a climber, medic and our most computer-handy member is the epitome of a team player.

A doctor may not be a legal requirement for an Everest expedition, but it is certainly a comfort to have one along. Sundeep had to dose people with gut infections and viruses on the trek in, and earlier this week may have set some sort of record when he had to perform a tricky piece of dentistry kneeling in the snow at Camp One, just above the Khumbu Icefall.

Both Sundeep, doing only his third dental operation, and Rob Owen, now recovered, wondered whether a tooth had been filled at an altitude of more than 6,000m before.

Turning to my fraying finger ends, some of the bloody slits that have occurred as a result of the dry mountain air have healed, but three more have had to be subject to the standard treatment - Super Glue in the slit, squeeze it tight, then bind with duct tape.

Sundeep is a doctor with 23 Parachute Field Ambulance, part of the Royal Army Medical Corps, celebrating its cen-



STEPHEN GOODWIN
Everest Diary

Base Camp

tenary this year. Apart from our guides, he is probably the most experienced of our Himalayan Kingdoms team and in 1996 got within 500m of the summit of Everest, climbing from the Tibetan side. It was a season of tragedy on the mountain and one female friend of Sundeep cried for three days fearing that the doctor was among the dead.

In fact, tragedy really brought Sundeep to mountaineering. Both his Indian-born parents died when he was 13 years old. A teacher suggested he go hill walking, and despite the dismissive comments of friends who said he would see nothing but rain and mist, the boy took to it. "They were right about the rain, but it allowed me to escape from the world of trusts and estates and all the mess I had to deal with," he said.

Exploration vied with medicine at Oxford where his dean, Professor John Leatham, told him, "well, you can keep going away so long as you keep coming back and passing exams".

As a lure, Himalayan King-

doms offer a discount to doctors on the £25,000 cost of Everest. Although Sundeep has a couple of sponsors, he has borne most of the cost himself. A bank overdraft of £55,000 is testimony to the young captain's love of expeditioning. He finds no conflict between his own ambitions on the mountain and being a doctor, even when the person in need might be on another team or, as in 1996, a yak-man with a badly burnt foot.

"There are some doctors who can divorce themselves from it and say for the next three months I'm not on call, but even without the discount I feel a moral obligation to do what I can," he said.

Sundeep put together a medical kit filling a 60-litre barrel and a large chest. He has liaised with doctors and medical

officers on other teams to try to ensure that vital equipment is sensibly distributed between the camps up the mountain.

Besides our immediate health, he also keeps a close eye on our "group dynamics". I suppose we all do, but it is a sensitive subject. "There are people here who haven't got a chance and there are people who are so highly driven that it scares me," Sundeep certainly does not put me in the latter category.

"The rest of us are fully determined to stand on the top," he said, perhaps misreading my own developing intentions. "But the summit party will self-select and it is in the interests of the team that those who aren't going to make it are honest with themselves. When it comes to decision time, it is just a lump of rock."



Cold comfort: The expedition's doctor, Sundeep Dhillon, carrying out emergency dental work on Rob Owen just above the Khumbu Icefall, at 6,000m
Photograph: Taken by Stephen Goodwin with a Fuji D5300 digital camera

Virgin takes on BA in no-frills fight

By Randeep Ramesh
Transport Correspondent

RICHARD BRANSON'S low-cost European airline, Virgin Express, is set to take on British Airways by launching head-to-head services competing with Go, BA's no-frills carrier.

Virgin Express will begin by launching flights from Stansted airport in Essex to Rome, Milan and Madrid via Brussels for £49 one-way. Go, which also flies from Stansted, operates direct to the same Italian destinations from £100 return.

Mr Branson's airline is also set to buy Sabre Airways, a small Gatwick-based charter carrier, for £6m this month. This will be used to launch another cut-price service, Virgin Sun, which will carry sun-seekers three times a day to Mediterranean destinations such as Crete.

The new Virgin services from Stansted will be run jointly with Sabena, Belgium's state airline. Starting on 17 May, passengers can take three flights a day to Brussels where connecting flights can take travellers on to European destinations.

"The fares are only slightly cheaper than Go's but with BA's operation you have to book a return," said Will Whitehorn, a director of Virgin Group.

However, a spokesman for Go said its customers were different to Virgin's. "They are

talking about changing at Brussels, we are offering direct turn-up-and-go travel."

The war is set to escalate as Virgin Express is likely to move its entire operations to Stansted from Belgium if union disputes and high operating costs continue to hamper the company's growth. Other airports that might also be used by Virgin to fly to the Continent include Glasgow, Manchester and Birmingham.

Many people mocked Mr Branson's plan to offer cheap fares in Europe, but he has been proved spectacularly right. Virgin Express now has 21 planes - having started with only 6 - and shares in the carrier are now worth \$25 (on the American stock exchange), up from an initial flotation price of \$15.

The deregulated skies over Europe have seen an unprecedented scramble for destinations by low-cost carriers. After the launch of Go earlier this month, KLM UK, which also operates from Stansted, started a £79 Saver fare to Milan.

EasyJet, which operates from Luton, has been so incensed by BA's move that it has lodged a High Court writ against the former state airline. James Rothnie, however, a spokesman for EasyJet, welcomed Virgin's arrival. "Virgin Express is not a dominant player and will not distort the market," he said.

Southall train crash driver charged

A MANSLAUGHTER charge was yesterday brought against the driver of the passenger train involved in the Southall rail crash in which seven people died.

Larry Harrison, 51, was at the controls of the Swansea-London express train which collided with an empty freight train in west London on 19 September last year.

He will appear at Ealing magistrates court in west London on 27 May, British Transport Police said.

Mr Harrison was on police bail for some months, although no charges had been brought until yesterday. British Transport Police said the manslaughter

charge had been brought after advice from the Crown Prosecution Service.

The Great Western train from Swansea was only a few minutes outside Paddington station, west London, when the collision occurred.

A public inquiry into the crash, in which more than 150 people were injured, was opened in February. But it was adjourned because of possible legal action.

Lew Adams, general secretary of the train drivers' union Aslef said he was "surprised and dismayed" at the charge. The union is to support the driver throughout the legal action.

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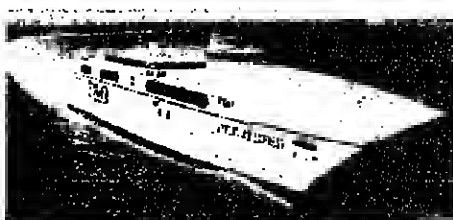
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A brush with the law for artist selling sex

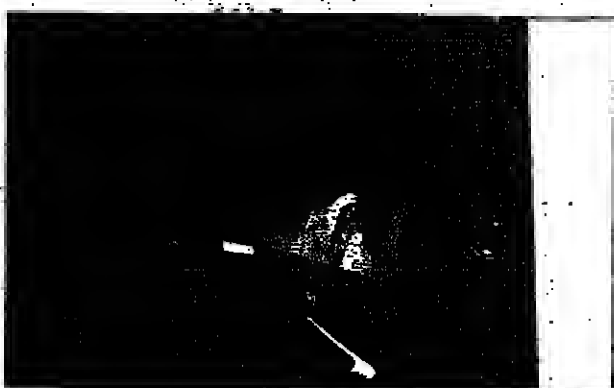
By Kate Watson-Smyth

IT STARTED with a media frenzy and the strong suspicion of an tacky, elaborate hoax. By yesterday afternoon the organisers of an "art for sex" exhibition looked to have attracted as much attention as they wanted. And then perhaps a little too much, as they were warned they could be facing heavy fines or imprisonment.

The delightfully entitled "Fuckart and Pimp" took place at the Decima Gallery where "artist" Angela Marshall intended to allow people in one at a time as she painted. The resulting "art" was to be consumed before Ms Marshall would sell it. A small picture was £25 plus the small matter of some oral sex, a medium one was £50 plus straight sex and for £75 it was a large painting and "anything kinky".

At the gallery in an unlikely south east London location early yesterday, Ms Marshall fluttered her eyelashes and preened for the cameras as the phone rang 000-stop with calls from across Europe. Media men (they were mostly men) jostled for position in the tiny gallery, but there were no punters.

One of the few non-media types, known only as Nick, had come out to take part but to



watch through a peep hole for £5. "I am doing social studies at Poly and I want to see what this is all about," he said.

Ms Marshall insisted she was "totally up for it" and appeared to be revelling in all the attention from the press. But as the punters stayed away it began to look increasingly like a scam to fool the newspapers.

Alex Chappel, the curator of Decima, denied it was a hoax. His protests were undermined somewhat by the fact that he has previously organised two other escapades designed to fool the press. Yesterday he insisted his latest enterprise was real and complained that the media were scaring off clients.

But just as everyone was giving up hope of anything happening, along came Mark Childs, buying for a collector.

other man. "Nick" and his colleague were undercover officers from Southwark Council.

Mr Chappel was warned that he was committing an offence under the 1982 Miscellaneous Provisions Act - put simply he was running a sex encounters venue without a licence. "We warned them that they were committing an offence and told them we would keep an eye on them and it is possible that legal proceedings will follow," the official said.

Meanwhile, Ms Marshall and Mr Childs emerged. "We have art" she declared brandishing a canvas covered in uninspiring scribbles and daubed with the somewhat telling slogan, "media c***s".

Whatever the truth of the matter only one question remained as an incongruous sense of anti-climax settled over those left behind - was it Art?



The buyer leaving Decima Gallery in Bermondsey yesterday after having sex with the artist Angela Marshall, a contract which drew the attention of officials from Southwark council (above left). Photograph: Nicola Hurst

Two child prisoners guarded by 100 staff

ONE hundred staff turned up for work yesterday for the opening of a controversial child prison - and look after just two young tearaways, the Home Office said.

Medway in Kent is the country's first secure training centre but it has already provoked fears that the £2,500-a-week regime will simply create a "college of crime".

The centre, run by Group 4, will eventually house up to 40 "trainees" - aged between 12 and 14. They will serve between three months and a year.

Ironically, as the unit opened for business, the Home Office launched a search for advisers to help ensure it stays largely empty.

The Youth Justice Board of England and Wales will advise on nationwide programmes to cut offending by young people.

The chair will get up to £45,000 a year for a three-day

week and the other 11 members will be paid £136 a day for three days work a month.

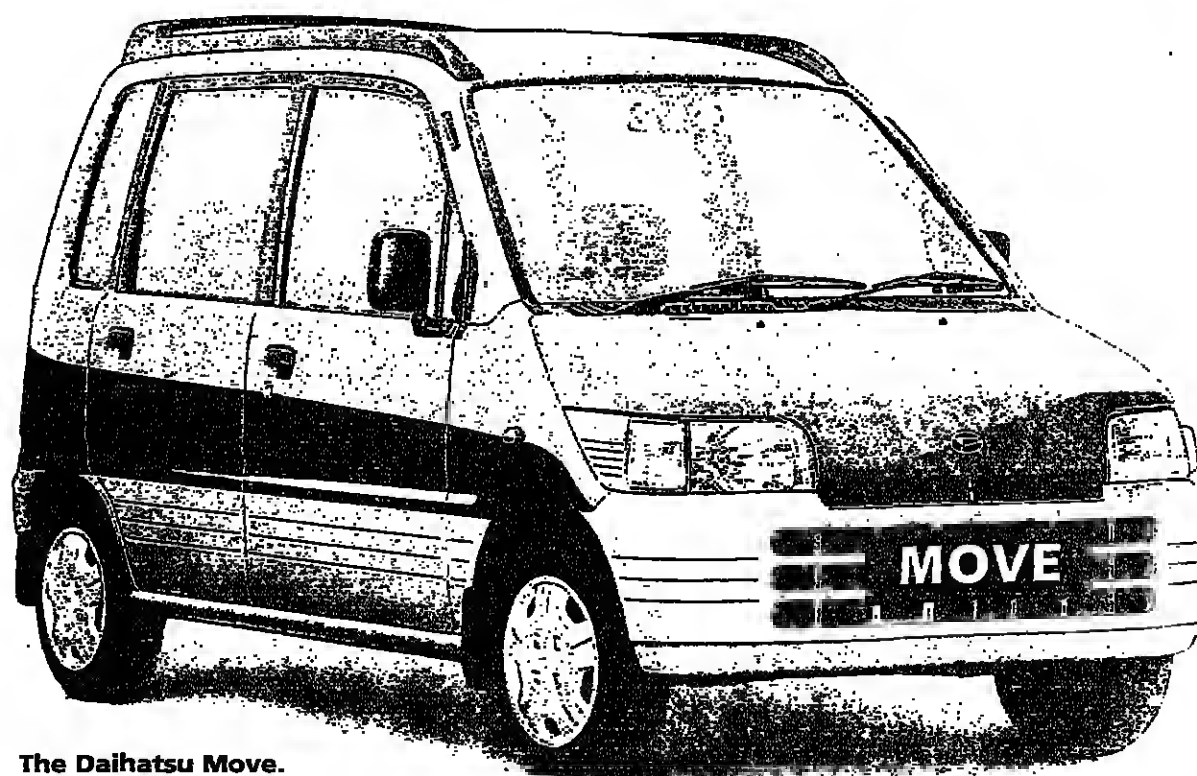
The board will help set up local youth offending teams which will co-ordinate the work of police and local authorities in fighting juvenile crime. It will also highlight ways of cutting delays in dealing with young criminals. The board, due to be up and running by October, will cost £1m a year to run.

Meanwhile, social workers and probation officers working with difficult children called on Jack Straw, the Home Secretary to end the "madness" of the new secure training centres.

The National Association for Youth Justice said conditions at Medway STC would "make difficult children worse."

"They will breed anger and resentment leading to dissatisfaction throughout adolescence," warned committee member Charles Bell.

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UK plutonium stocks doubled in last decade

By Fran Abrams
Political Correspondent

PLUTONIUM stocks in Britain have doubled in the past 10 years, an analysis of official figures has revealed. While imports of the radioactive substance have averaged around 2,000 kilograms a year, exports stand at just 200kg a year.

The revelation will cause new fears at a time when pressure is growing on the Government to decide on the future of its nuclear material stores.

One of the last acts of the Conservative government was to cancel plans for a huge underground repository at Sellafield in Cumbria. Although a House of Lords committee is investigating the nuclear waste problem as part of a defence review, there have been few indications of how this government intends to tackle the problem.

Figures compiled by Norman Baker, Liberal Democrat MP for Lewes, show that while Britain held 48.5 tonnes of plutonium on 31 March 1988, it held 96.5 tonnes on the same date in 1997. "We are building a plutonium mountain..." he

said. "There seems to be no strategy and it is irresponsible in the extreme to continue to accumulate just about the most dangerous substance on earth in these quantities," he said.

Much of the plutonium is processed at Sellafield. British Nuclear Fuels Limited has applied for a licence to start a £300m factory which would turn the reprocessed plutonium into nuclear fuel.

Most of Britain's civil stock of plutonium is held behind razor wire in a bunker at Sellafield, along with some of the military stock. The rest of the military plutonium is held at the Atomic Weapons Establishment at Aldermaston. A recent report compiled by a Labour MP and the Campaign for Nuclear Disarmament predicted that Aldermaston would run out of space to store radioactive by-products from the Trident nuclear programme by 2002.

At Westminster, 136 MPs have signed an Early Day Motion expressing concern at the increasing stockpiles of plutonium in the UK and around the world. Britain needs a clear policy on how to deal with the

material, it argues, calling for a full public debate on the potential health, environment and proliferation risks posed by the stockpile.

William Peden, parliamentary officer of CND, echoed the demand. The figures published by the Government only covered the civil stockpile, he said. "The big, unanswered question is how much military stockpile the Government has."

A spokesman for BNFL said that since 1976 all its reprocessing contracts with overseas customers had specified that the materials would be sent back. However, some of the operations took several years.

"It is not as if this material is just going to stay here," he said. "The plutonium that is stored can be stored safely. A recent report by the Royal Society said we did that very well."

A spokesman for the Department of Trade and Industry said it was up to the owners of the spent fuel, Magnox Electric, British Energy and BNFL, to choose how to manage it.

"Stocks of plutonium... all need to be safely and securely stored and used," he said.



Art attack: Top graffiti artist Pulse, right, in front of a recent piece of work at the Acklam adventure playground under the Westway in north Kensington, London. With the help of seven other artists the work was completed in 20 hours
Photograph: Adrian Dennis

Policewoman's killer sent to Rampton

THE KILLER of policewoman Nina Mackay was yesterday sent indefinitely to Rampton top security mental hospital by a judge at the Old Bailey.

Magdi Elgizouli, 30, a paranoid schizophrenic, had pleaded not guilty to the murder of 25-year-old PC Mackay in October last year, but admitted manslaughter on the grounds of diminished responsibility.

PC Mackay, from Essex, was stabbed as she and colleagues went to arrest Elgizouli, who is unemployed, at a flat in Stratford, east London.

She was taken to hospital after being wounded but died despite a desperate fight to save her. The young officer had served with the Metropolitan force for five years.

PC Mackay and other colleagues forced entry into the premises as part of a police operation to arrest the defendant, who was in breach of bail conditions.

The Recorder of London, Sir Lawrence Verney QC, in sentencing the defendant, told him: "Magdi Elgizouli, you have pleaded guilty to causing the death of a very promising young police officer whom everyone has spoken with pride and affection."

"If you are beginning to realise what it is you have done then you will indeed be feeling great remorse."

The judge made an order that the defendant be detained and treated at Rampton and a

further order restricting his discharge without limit of time.

Flanked by five security officers and dressed in a striped shirt, Elgizouli stood impassively in the dock as the judge made his orders.

Members of his victim's family sat in the public gallery.

The judge told Elgizouli: "At the time when you did it, all the

you could not realise that you were indeed a very ill man."

He added: "All the doctors who have reported are unanimous, both as to your condition and as to the way in which it should now be treated."

"It can only be treated in a very secure hospital, and accommodation is available at Rampton. That being said I shall make an order under section 37 of the Mental Health Act that you be detained and treated at Rampton Hospital and a further order under section 41 of the Act restricting your discharge without limit of time."

"It will, in the first place, be up to the doctors to determine when and if it is safe for you to be discharged and then either for [government] or a tribunal to determine when you should be discharged."

"The court has no control over that. The court can only draw attention to the very considerable history here and to the obvious need for the utmost care."

The victim's father, who lives in Loughton, Essex, and spent 35 years in the police force, said: "Her death was needless. She was only doing her duty."

He added: "I wanted her to do something else but she was a very determined young lady. I always feared for her life after she enlisted. She joined the police because of the challenge it offered."



Nina Mackay: Promising young police officer

Gamekeeper turns poacher as BBC man plots Auntie's abolition

By David Walker

A BBC economics correspondent, given time off to write a book, has repaid the favour by producing a blueprint for the corporation's abolition, identifying it as part of the "Leviathan" of big government.

In *Public Spending*, to be published next month under the imprimatur of the free-market think tank the Social Market Foundation (SMF), the economics specialist Evan Davis - frequently to be seen on the *Newsnight* on BBC2 - says the BBC will soon have to "face its reckoning". He hints that the programme of internal reforms by John Birt, the director-general, has been self-defeating and argues strongly for pay-per-view funding for television.

"We require fairly compelling new arguments for the maintenance of a licence-fee system that was introduced in a completely different age," Mr Davis writes. "Technology

is providing a good reason for collective finance through taxation to diminish."

Mr Davis also tempts fate by wondering aloud whether the BBC should be allowed to lobby the Government on broadcasting policy. "If the BBC," he writes, "knows more about broadcasting than the rest of us, it is justified in informing us of policy changes. Yet yielding to [its] opinion involves subverting the national interest."

BBC rules state that its correspondents should not engage in outside activities which call into question their editorial impartiality. Mr Davis said his book was "intellectual, not subliminal" and denied that the SMF was right-wing. Its chair is, however, the Tory peer Lord Skidelsky and in his introduction Mr Davis credits Danny Filkenstein, former director of the SMF and now head of the research department at Conservative Central Office. Among economics specialists

Mr Davis is renowned for his high intelligence but also for his ideological standpoint. The contrast he uses in the new book between those who use economic logic and those "who are simply morally highly strung" is considered typical.

The SMF attracted controversy two years ago when it accused BBC Radio 4's *Today* programme of conniving with advocates of extra public spending. Its "study" was enthusiastically taken up by the Tories. For Mr Davis, public spending is too big, badly organised and likely to corrupt the functioning of free markets. The National Health Service should be dismantled if not privatised, councils restricted to providing parks and maintaining roads and vouchers introduced for parents of school-age children. Advocates of the renationalisation of railways are severely reproved - aversion to profit-making by privatised rail companies make no sense, he says.

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مكتبة الانجمن

Front to stand by cash sweetener for French babies

By Adam Lebor
in Paris

MUNICIPAL officials in a French town controlled by the anti-immigrant National Front yesterday said they planned to carry on paying cash bonuses to native French and European Union couples who have a baby, in spite of the fact that such payments have been declared illegal by a court.

The administrative court in Marseilles said the 5,000-franc (about £500) bonus, aimed at encouraging childbirth but openly discriminating against non-Europeans, was illegal as it broke a constitutional principle that recipients of state aid must receive equal treatment.

The Movement Against Racism (MRAP), which had challenged the legality of the bonus offered by Vitrolles mayor Catherine Mégret, welcomed the court ruling. It described the bonus as "a shameful and humiliating embezzlement of taxes" and said the court's decision showed the National Front's policy of "national preference" was illegal and called into question the legality of the party itself. So far about 30 families have received the money.

One bonus has been returned because the family received unwelcome publicity, said a spokeswoman for the mayor's office. The payments would continue while the town hall appealed, she added.

Mrs Mégret pledged an immediate fightback against the court decision. "We deplore the decision of the administrative tribunal of Marseilles which has ruled against our de-

Chirac poll reform targets far right

INA move party designed to weaken the power of the National Front, especially at a local level, President Jacques Chirac suggested on Thursday that deputies be elected to the European Parliament in regional constituencies rather than nationwide.

Like many of the centre-right, Mr Chirac is fearful of a strong showing by the NF in next year's European elections. Under the current proportional representation system, MPs are elected on nationwide lists decided by party headquarters. But Mr Chirac's reasoning is that the strong local and regional infrastructure of the mainstream centre-right will allow its parties successfully to promote local men and women to the detriment of the extreme-right.

A move towards electing Euro-MPs by regional constituencies would allow the centre-right local party activists to promote locally-known faces, thus hopefully eclipsing the extreme-right.

illegal immigrants who are allocated a ticket home. The municipality of Vitrolles does not accept this decision and will be appealing against it, in pursuit of its fight to defend French families.

The NF controls four town halls in southern France. It advocates sending Arab and African immigrants "home" and wants to amend the constitution in order to give preference to French citizens in jobs, housing and other state benefits.

The birth bonus was introduced last January. At the time, Mrs Mégret's husband Bruno, deputy national leader of the far-right party, described the "national preference measure" as a patriotic act.

"The purpose of this measure is to try to help French families at a time when the government is penalising them and to encourage French births in order to ensure more harmony," he told journalists.

Bruno Mégret is widely viewed as the power behind the scenes of Vitrolles, a puppet-master pulling his wife's strings. He is considered the most likely successor to the party's ageing leader Jean-Marie Le Pen. The party's actions in Vitrolles are seen as a testing ground for their policies.

Since the NF took power in Vitrolles, it has closed down Suhmarine, a city-funded music café which became a focus for anti-NF activity, and has renamed streets and squares formerly named for François Mitterrand and Nelson Mandela.

Front officials in the other towns it controls have also installed right-wing literature in public libraries.



White child: Bruno Mégret (left), deputy leader of the National Front, in February hands over a 5,000-franc bonus to a couple who have had a baby. The policy has been declared illegal. Photograph: AFP/Georges

Turin braces for Shroud millions

By Anne Hanley
in Turin

THE DOORS of Turin cathedral - temporarily closed for last minute preparations - will reopen tomorrow to allow 4,000 people per hour a two-minute squirt at what many Catholics venerate as Christianity's holiest relic and what many scientists consider a brilliant, inexplicable medieval fake.

The Turin shroud, the piece of linen long believed to have been wrapped around Jesus' body after the crucifixion, goes back on show in the cathedral after 20 years spent folded in its jewel-studded casket.

In a two month "exposition", 2 million people are expected to file past the shroud, which is housed in an explosion proof glass case.

The Turin diocese has sunk 8.5 billion (£2.8m) lira into organisation and shroud-related events. Italian State Railways are offering cut-price shroud packages.

And all for a piece of linen which even the Catholic church has admitted is of questionable origin.

From unquestioned object of veneration, the shroud was relegated in 1988 to the lowly status of mediaeval scam when Carbon-14 tests dated it to between 1260 and 1390. Down but not out, the shroud's champions fought back, and soon succeeded in reinstating it to a noble place in popular mythology: the shroud was hailed not only as Christ's winding sheet, but as a sacred relic under attack.

The Catholic church has wisely remained above the fray. Which is not to say that it is not prepared to reward those who make the trip. Catholic women, for example, who have earned themselves *de facto* excommunication by having abortions, can wipe the slate clean with a trip to Turin.

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Sins of delinquent children could be visited on France's parents

THE mysterious video-recorder that suddenly appears in a teenager's room could prove costly for French parents who fail to ask where it came from, writes Adam Lebor.

A government-commissioned report on juvenile crime, by two Socialist MPs, calls for

parents to be prosecuted if their children consistently commit crimes. It follows media reports on rising juvenile crime: in Seine-St-Denis, a poor Paris suburb, 27 per cent of crimes last year were by minors. Christine Lazerges, one of the report's authors, said parents

could be convicted of receiving stolen goods and thus liable to jail if they did nothing about their children possessing goods they could not have afforded.

The MPs also suggest cracking down on parents with unauthorised weapons. There has been a rash of shootings or ac-

cidents by children taking weapons from home to school.

The 135 suggested measures in the report include cutting family allowances to parents seen to be failing to use the money for their children's welfare, or if the children played truant repeatedly and for long

periods. "We must end the situation whereby, through laziness or omission, parents abdicate responsibility and wash their hands of what their children are doing," said the co-author of the report, Jean-Pierre Balduek. However, many magistrates specialising in minors

said they feared parents of unruly children could be unjustly persecuted if the recommendations were implemented and they warned that such measures would only add to the difficulties of families concerned, many of whom are already in social and economic difficulty.

The report also calls for the creation of 500 posts of youth educators and instructors, a doubling of magistrates of the public prosecutors office who specialise in children and more community policing and more residential centres for child offenders.

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Japanese bargain with Russia while they can

By Richard Lloyd Parry
in Tokyo

A FEW MILES off its north-east coast, on every Japanese-made map of Japan, are three enticing-looking islands called Etorofu, Kunashiri and Shikotan. The map shows them to be steep and mountainous, with small fishing towns clinging to the coastline. They look like the perfect place for an adventure holiday - you imagine bears, and smouldering volcanoes, and icebergs during the winter.

But travel agents in Tokyo giggle uncomfortably when you ask about the islands and, whatever the maps claim, any attempt to cross the narrow straits which separate them from the Japanese mainland can only end one way: interception and arrest by Russian gunboats.

These are the Northern Territories (the Southern Kurile Islands to the rest of the world), a relic of the Cold War, and the principal reason for Boris Yeltsin's visit to Japan this weekend. Since August 1945, when Russia seized the three islands and the uninhabited islets of Habomai, they have been the subject of a dispute which has overshadowed all else in Russia-Japan relations.

Though neighbours, the two countries conduct little trade with each other - Russia counts for less than 1 per cent of Japanese overseas trade. Even after the end of the Cold War, little aid has found its way from Tokyo to Moscow. Most remarkably, the two sides have never signed a peace treaty: technically the Second World War has never ended between Russia and Japan.



During the Cold War, relations were so bad that this detail hardly made a difference, but since the collapse of the Soviet Union it has become anomalous. In the last year, great efforts have been made to sew up a deal. "For 40 years things were absolutely chilly," says a Japanese official. "Now we find to our

north this big country with similar values to our own - democracy and the free market." Last year, at their first summit in Siberia, the two leaders promised to work on a peace treaty and sign it by 2000, the scheduled date for Russia's next presidential election.

Physical control of the Southern Kuriles clearly belongs to Russia, as the Japanese were expelled at the end of the war and replaced by transplanted Soviet citizens. There is still a Russian garrison on the islands. But the status quo is unsatisfactory, so the 18 months between now and the 2000 deadline will be a battle of nerves.

For Mr Yeltsin, there is the lure of Japanese money. After the summit in Siberia, Tokyo announced \$1.5bn (£888m) in loans. What few polls have been conducted suggest that plenty of Russians in the Kuriles would be happy to live in rich Japan rather than under distant Moscow. But no Russian president is going to hand them over without a big incentive.

Japan insists on recognition of its sovereignty as a precondition to a peace treaty - having achieved that, it is clear no one would expect the islands to be returned overnight. Security,

rather than possession, is a consideration. During the Cold War, the Kuriles were important principally for their strategic value as a hiding place for Russian nuclear submarines and potentially as the launch pad for a Soviet invasion. "That fear has receded," says a Japanese government source, "but I don't know if it's disappeared".

The Japanese are burdened with continuing uncertainty about the Russian presidency. However keen on a treaty with Japan, Mr Yeltsin has bigger things to worry about at home, and Tokyo is downplaying expectations of any big developments this weekend. Having postponed his visit for a week, Japanese diplomats take comfort in the fact that Mr Yeltsin has chosen to come at all. They know poor health or political weakness could carry him off before their year 2000 deadline. In the village of Kawana where the Prime Minister and President will fish this weekend, a helicopter will be on standby to chopper Mr Yeltsin off - onto a plane to Moscow or, in extremis, to hospital. "The important thing is to make the most of this upsurge," says a Japanese government source. It might be years before the chance arises again.



Minority interest: Demonstrators in Tokyo protesting in support of the Ainu, an aboriginal minority from the northern part of the Japanese archipelago. They claim the disputed Southern Kuriles should be handed to the Ainu. Photograph: Reuters

Yeltsin keeps cards close to his chest on Kurile Islands deal

By Phil Reeves
in Moscow

BORIS YELTSIN was last night preparing to fly from Moscow leaving behind a bewildered country without a prime minister, a permanent government, or any clear indication of who is in charge of the Kremlin while he is away.

Closely monitored by his doctors, the President faced a

weekend of talks with Japan's prime minister, Ryutaro Hashimoto, that could scarcely have been more unfortunately timed. Yesterday, for the second time, the lower house of parliament refused to confirm Sergei Kiriyenko, the 35-year-old provincial neophyte whom Mr Yeltsin - to universal astonishment - nominated as his prime minister last month. The final vote is next week: if he is

again rejected, the law states the parliament must be dissolved.

As Mr Yeltsin prepared to leave his residence outside Moscow, accompanied by his younger daughter Tatyana (chief suspect as one of the authors of the current crisis), he was immersed in a crisis as transparent as the filthy spring slush that has engulfed the capital.

His game of brinkmanship with parliament, which the Pres-

ident is trying to pass off as "politics as normal", is complex enough. But it was also unclear who is running the show while he is away. He will remain in charge of the trigger-controlling Russia's arsenal of nuclear weapons during his stay in the resort of Kawana, 75 miles south-west of Tokyo. But no laws exist specifying who stands in if - as is possible, given his poor health record - he is in-

capacitated. Under the constitution, that job falls to the prime minister. But Russia has not got one. Earlier this week, Mr Kiriyenko announced he would take command, but his remarks were brushed aside by the Kremlin, which said the President himself would remain at the helm.

Even if Mr Yeltsin's trip were taking place in less troubled times, it would still be viewed

with foreboding in Russia, especially among "the family" - his handlers, wife and daughters - and the cluster of moguls who support the Kremlin.

They know all too well that the 67-year-old President does not travel well these days. His trip to Sweden late last year, when he seemed confused as to where he was, produced a stack of embarrassing headlines questioning his mental condition.

Last month, he tried to give an end-of-talks press conference before discussions had even begun with Jacques Chirac and Helmut Kohl in Moscow.

Russia will be hoping that this time there will be no hitches as Mr Yeltsin sits down with Mr Hashimoto. The agenda includes discussing a peace treaty ending the hostilities of the Second World War - a document placed on ice by a dispute over

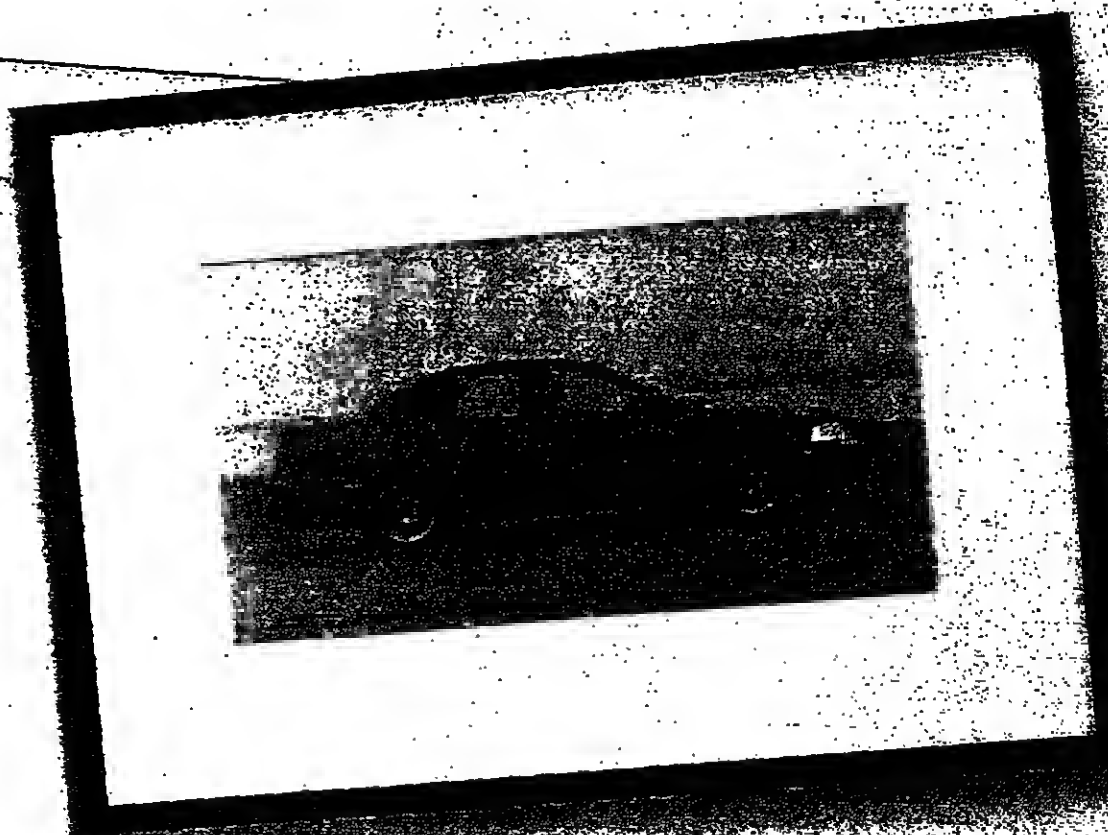
the Kurile Islands. The summit has already been postponed once because of Mr Yeltsin's domestic political problems.

It will be an informal meeting in the beachside hotel where Marilyn Monroe honeymooned with Joe DiMaggio.

But no amount of glamour is likely to lessen the anxiety of the President's aides to get their man back home as fast as possible.

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سكان الأصغر

Standoff as Duma rejects Kiriyeenko

BORIS YELTSIN last night stood firmly by his chosen, but twice rejected, prime minister and set the stage for the most politically precarious stand-off with parliament since he sent in the tanks in 1993, writes Phil Reeves in Moscow.

His tug-of-war with an indignant legislature entered its final nail-biting stage as he nominated Sergei Kiriyenko as premier for a third time - ignoring complaints that the 35-year-old is too inexperienced to chair the government of a vast nuclear power. The President's move came after the 450-member lower house, the State Duma, refused for a second time to confirm Mr Kiriyenko in the job.

The former provincial banker won only 115 votes from the Communist- and nationalist-dominated chamber - 111 less than he needed to be confirmed, and 28 fewer than when his candidacy was first rejected a week ago. Mr Yeltsin has insisted throughout that Mr Kiriyenko, a technocrat who favours market economics, is his only candidate for the job, which became vacant when he sacked Viktor Chernomyrdin and his administration on 23 March. By the constitution, a third rejection would automatically lead to the Duma's dissolution and new elections.

The final vote will be next week. The key question is whether both adversaries are willing to see the Duma disbanded, or if one side's nerves will crack. Both stood to lose if the chamber is shut down. The Kremlin knows that the next parliament is likely to be even more hostile. What ever happens, though, Mr Yeltsin gets his man. If the Duma is dissolved, Mr Kiriyenko will be automatically confirmed as premier, and a cabinet appointed. For parliament, the downside is the uncertainty of keeping their seats, the loss of treasured perks, and a fear that Mr Yeltsin may find a way of delaying new elections.

Yesterday, the Communist leader, Gennady Zyuganov declared that Russia was now "hostage to a dead constitution and an absolutely incapable president". Mr Yeltsin put a brave face on the crisis. As he prepared to fly to Japan, he took the result "calmly", his spokesman said. Since this damaging business is of his own making, there is not much else he could do.



For sale: Shops and stall in central Baghdad display their wares in a desperate bid to tempt buyers. Photograph: Rex Features

Iraqi economy has gone to the dogs

By Patrick Cockburn
in Baghdad

FRIDAY is the day of the dog market in Baghdad. It takes place in the Souq al-Gazil, a stretch of empty ground beside the main road on the edge of the main market, which echoes with the sound of several hundred barking dogs from early in the morning.

They come in all sizes from dapper terriers to grim German Shepherds. Their owners mostly are selling them as guard dogs. These are popular among Iraqis because of the increase in robberies and theft as the country gets poorer as a result of sanctions.

"Nimr is a clever dog," said a man, indicating the pugnacious hound beside him. "He will tear a piece out of any enemy who gets near your home. But if he sees somebody whom he knows is a friend of his owner he will never attack him."

The expression on Nimr's face did not give one complete confidence in his friend-or-foe identification system, but he looked as if he was worth the 25,000 Iraqi dinars (£15) being asked for him.

Iraqis do not usually keep dogs as indoor pets, but in one corner of the Souq al-Gazil a group of better dressed owners were disposing of poodles and dachshunds who were clearly not cut out to guard anybody.

The most popular pets for sale are pigeons, doves, parrots and budgies. But in the middle of the souq is an entire street filled with people buying and selling goldfish

along with fish tanks and ornaments.

"When Iraqis want to enjoy themselves on a Friday they go to the markets," said an Iraqi friend. From early in the morning they pour into Shurjah, the central market area on the east bank of the Tigris.

Since sanctions were imposed eight years ago the markets have grown as Iraqis try to survive by selling and buying small quantities of goods. Nothing exposes the real poverty of the country better. People sit for hours in the sun trying to sell a broken electric fire or some cracked plates.

There is also the continuing need for spare parts. The streets are full of cars, but none have been imported since 1990. They are cheap to run because 60 litres of gasoline - the only item not in short supply or very expensive - costs just £2. In one morning two cars I was travelling in broke down. The first had a broken fuel pump. The second started emitting clouds of smoke or steam from the engine. In each case the only remedy for the driver was to go immediately to Shurjah market and try to find the spare part.

There are people with money in Baghdad. In the bird market a merchant showed us two hawks for hunting, each tethered to the stump of a tree. He said: "The first comes from Kurdistan and I will sell him for 750,000 dinars (£450) the other is from Iran and will cost you one-and-a-quarter million dinars (£750)." He seemed confident he would find somebody to buy them.

The saddest place in the whole

of Shurjah market is probably the streets where Iraqi intellectuals come to sell their books. Many are laid out on the pavement off al-Rashid street. Some were obviously once part of somebody's university course, like Henry IV Part One or a battered Penguin classic edition of Sophocles.

Baghdad does not show the same signs of poverty as Beirut did in the civil war, when there were obvious symptoms of the collapse of government. Rubbish either rotted where it was left or was consumed in bonfires which burned all over the city. But Baghdad still works. Cars obey traffic lights, though there are frequent electricity black-outs. There are also signs of better times ahead with more foreigners turning up, looking for business. There are pilgrims, mostly Lebanese and Iranian, going to the great shrines at Karbala and Najaf. There are hopes, perhaps misplaced, that the crisis and near war in February brought the end of sanctions nearer.

But this does not do much good to the mass of Iraqis. The collapse of the immunisation programme means diseases like polio, tuberculosis, meningitis and measles have become common. Most telling of all are the beggars on the streets. Last week, as we drove into Baghdad, three girls, all beggars and all under eight, launched themselves at our still moving car and clung onto the doorhandles and wing mirror, allowing themselves to be dragged along the road until we could stop and pay them off.

Tensions rise over arms inspections

BARELY two months after Kofi Annan negotiated an end to the winter stand-off between the United Nations and Iraq, concern was mounting yesterday that tensions over UN weapons inspections in that country may soon be reignited, writes David Osborne in New York.

Pessimism in New York centred on a new report to the UN Security Council from the chief weapons inspector, Richard Butler. In it, he says that his teams have made "virtual-

ly no progress" since his last report six months ago.

In his report, which will be considered by the council on 27 April, Mr Butler points to the disruptions caused by the stand-off which centred on access for inspectors to Saddam Hussein's multiple palaces.

"If this is what Iraq intended by the crisis, then, in large measure, it could be said to have been successful," Mr Butler wrote. "A major consequence of the four-month crisis

authorised by Iraq has been that, in contrast with the prior reporting period, virtually no progress in verifying disarmament has been able to be reported."

Only when Mr Butler certifies that he is satisfied that all of Iraq's programmes to produce nuclear, biological and chemical weapons have been dismantled can the Security Council consider lifting the sanctions imposed on the country after the Gulf War.

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aving

Poland's president Aleksander Kwasniewski awarded the highest state distinction, the White Eagle Order, to Marek Edelman, 75, the only surviving leader of the ill-fated uprising in the Warsaw ghetto in April 1943. — AP Warsaw

هكذا من الأحرار

Rugby

Saving the view from the bridge

Historic Ludlow survived the Civil War, but it faces its most serious threat from developers, says Julian Critchley

LUDLOW, one of the most beautiful small towns in England, is under threat from the planners. The castle, from which Wales was governed 400 hundred years ago, is under siege, not from Cromwellians who captured the town during the Civil War, but from the developers, planners and the South Shropshire District Council.

Turner painted the castle, Dinham bridge and the river Teme; it is precisely that view that is vulnerable to desecration in the names of profit and "progress".

An ugly covered swimming pool is to be torn down. In its place it is proposed to permit a firm of Telford developers to put up six dwellings in Midland red brick, in painful contrast to the Silurian yellow limestone of the castle.

At least that was the idea, and it was originally passed by the relevant committee by 14 votes to one. But, thanks to angry Ludlovians, and a petition of 300 signatures, the district council promptly met again and voted to reverse their original decision by one to 14. But there is a catch. Ludlovians have been given until the end of April to match the £150,000 which the district council considers to be the value of the site. So far Guild '98, a body of local people, have raised £23,000 in pledges, including one of £5,000 from the Plymouth Estates.

All 13 "Ludlows" in North America have been written to by the Guild asking for pledges and have received a video of Ludlow itself. The English Partnerships Community Investment Fund has been approached (so far without result), the National Lottery Charities Board, the Civic Trust Local Projects Fund and several other similar bodies. Lord Powis, who owns the castle has been written to asking him for his support. We wait in hope.

Guild '98 has organised a town meeting for the end of April to be followed by a brief which will be sent to every district councillor (Ludlow has seven out of 42 councillors). Our dilemma is quite simply put. The price put on the site by the district council seems infinitely elastic, while the time allowed to protesters, remarkably short. We can either raise the money, which seems unlikely; or, so muddy the waters that developers will fight shy of raising a hornet's nest of protest.

The site itself was originally bought by public subscription: ownership passed to the old town council, and then in the plethora of local government reorganisation that has characterised recent years, was acquired by South Shropshire District Council. Guild '98 would prefer the site to become

an open space-memorial garden and to refurbish the old mill to generate electricity from the River Teme, which we have been told is a practicable proposition. If this development were not enough, Ludlow is faced with a rash of other developments, many, if not all of which, would deface the town: the barbarians are at the gates.

The southern approach road runs through unspoilt country with a marvellous view of the Cleve Hill directly into the town and its 14th century bridge. There are plans afoot to build on the eastern side of the road, thus adding a third suburb to the town. One of Ludlow's many attractions is that on two sides at least, town gives way suddenly to country.



Historic view: Turner's impression of Ludlow Castle with Dinham bridge across the Teme river, and the same view today (below)

Bridgemen Arts Library

Ludlow is faced with a rash of developments. The barbarians are at the gate

Tesco has been granted permission to build a supermarket on what was a council-owned site at the bottom of Corve Street. When he was Secretary of State for the Environment, John Gummer twice rejected the planned building as "unsuitable". John Prescott is now being asked to consider a third plan. Whatever its merits or demerits, a supermarket on such a site would attract many people living in south Shropshire, who would park their cars outside and do their shopping. If this went ahead, few, if anyone, would climb the long and very steep hill that is Corve Street to shop in the town proper, thus endangering the bulk of the town's shops which lie within the conservation area at the top of the town.

Besides having much beautiful Georgian and Tudor architecture, we can boast six butchers' shops, an excellent deli, and several fruiterers. All would suffer were Tesco to take away their trade. There is already an ominous rash of charity shops. A final threat is housing development on Gallops Bank, one of the two remaining green spaces to the east of the old town.

What could happen in handsome Ludlow, is typical of what is, and has been, happening elsewhere. All one has to do is to travel 10 miles south of the Hereford Road as far as Leominster to see what "development" has done to a small country town. The heart has been taken out

of it by careless road traffic schemes and an out-of-town supermarket.

With such an example at its doorstep, it is little wonder that the townsfolk of Ludlow, who include many newcomers taking advantage of comparatively low house prices, are up in arms. A final irony is in the picture of Ludlow, sponsored by the Chamber of Commerce, that is to be found on the A49. The message is "Come to Ludlow", the picture believeth or not, is Turner's of the castle and Dinham bridge - but without the six dwellings the local authority seems so keen on inflicting on the finest view of the town.

God save us from the planners.

Party on: a globetrotter's guide to the millennium

You might think all the best bashes are booked up. You'd be wrong. By Nicole Veash

ON MILLENNIUM EVE the world is expected to erupt into the mother of all parties, with nearly 2 billion people celebrating as midnight chimes on 31 December, 1999. Most of us have taken it for granted that villages, towns and cities across Europe, the Americas, Australasia and the Pacific will try to outdo each other with fabulous displays of fireworks, laser and light shows, live entertainment, festivals, parades, big-name bands and grand ceremonial gestures. In Britain, the Cabinet is expected to approve a four-day bank holiday to mark the new age, giving us the opportunity to have an all-day, all-night extravaganza as the culmination of the celebrations.

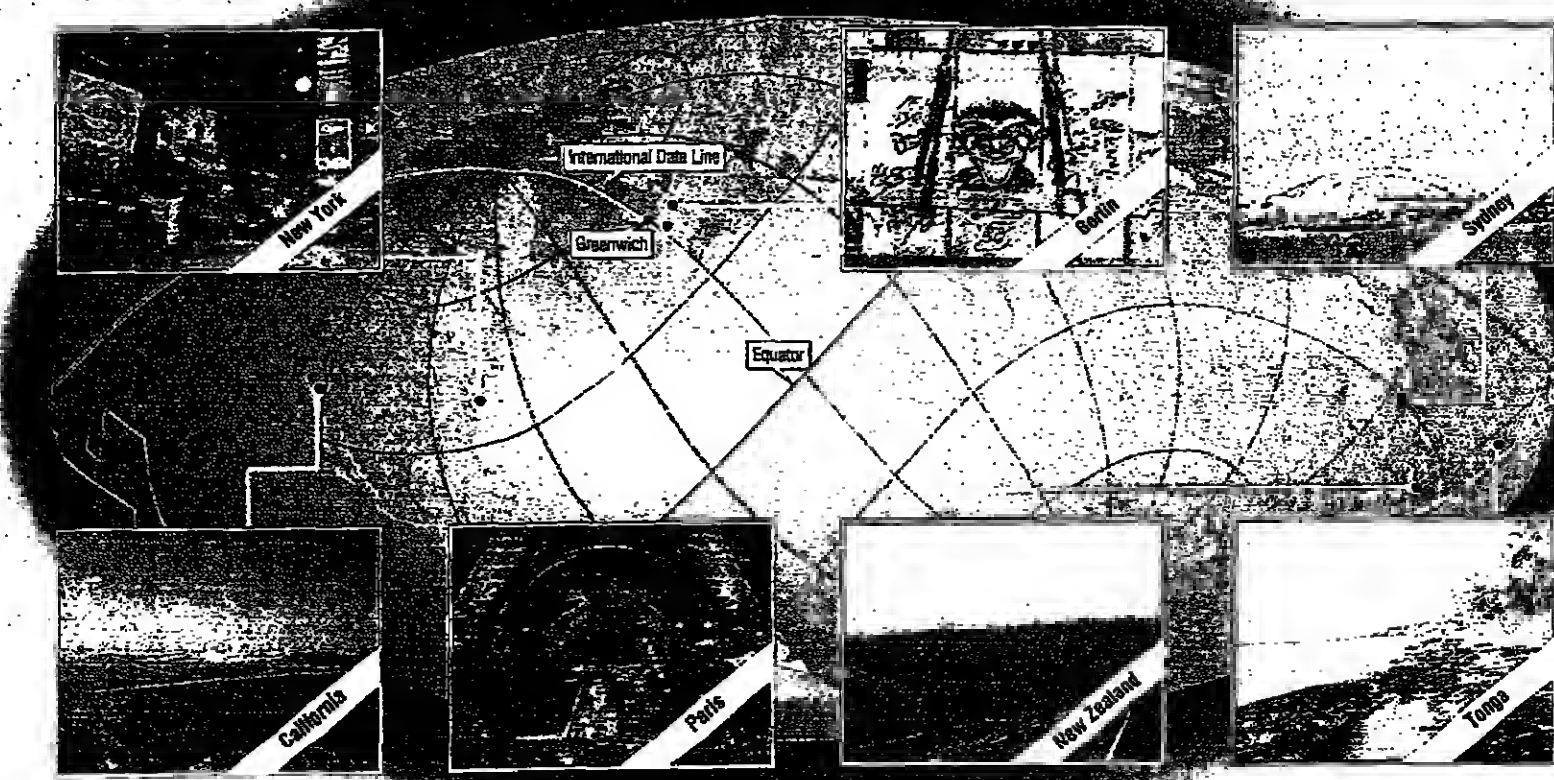
Not so fast. Rumours of fully booked hotels, restaurants and planes have been much exaggerated. So far, it seems as if most people are going to do what they normally do - sup the cocoa during a night-in with Clive James on TV - unless they make a sudden effort to arrange a big bash.

But with the planned four-day break, which Culture Secretary Chris Smith has proposed (suggesting Friday 31 December and Monday 3 January as bank holidays), the temptation for Britons is to look further afield than the Greenwich Millennium Dome and head to the four corners of the globe for the party of the century.

Take, for example, Gisborne, on New Zealand's north-east coast. There you could glimpse the first sunrise of the new millennium and join around 100,000 party-goers expected to swarm to the town and surrounding areas. Over the water, Ric Birch, producer of the opening

The Big Night

Where people will be welcoming in the new millennium



Based on "Ultimate Millennium projector"

Graphic: Phil Welch

ceremony of Australia's 2000 Olympic Games, has been asked to stage an outdoor party in Sydney harbour and be still has a lot of space to fill.

Because the International Date Line passes through the South Pacific, there will be major events on many paradise islands. Tonga's New Millennium Festival will run

throughout December, while a pan-Fijian party will climax in a dawn-to-dusk concert on the island of Viti Line.

A three-day bash in southern California is expected to attract thousands. The outdoor Party 2000, aimed at America's post-Woodstock generation, has a £662m budget and is expected to attract 2.5 million people. Only 100,000 tickets have so far been sold. Slicker, media-led spectacles will take place across America, including a gathering in Times Square, synonymous with New Year's Eve in American minds, where satellite television will link up with festivals around the world. Stephen J. Morello, president of the New

York Convention and Visitors' Bureau, says: "We have hardly even begun to take reservations and it is annoying that various promoters are claiming the city's hotels have been sold out when they haven't."

Tens of thousands of people are expected to congregate around the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. The city's

celebrations are to stretch over 20 months, incorporating the 10th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Paris plans a series of bizarre (and fairly tasteless) displays, including turning the Eiffel Tower into a high-tech chicken for a night. An enormous egg will descend out of the belly of the tower, to the sound of 2,000 drums from five continents. When the egg cracks open, hundreds of television screens relaying images of millennium parties from around the globe will be revealed. There is also a plan to fill the River Seine with coloured plastic fish. The city's celebrated George V Hotel has only 50 rooms booked for the big night, with another 200 still available for partygoers.

Closer to home, London and Edinburgh will compete for the best celebration. The extra bank holiday gives those from outside London time to travel to the Millennium Dome for the New Year's Eve party. While in the Scottish capital, Hogmanay has been elevated to a four-day festival for more than 350,000 people.

Although celebrations will thrill part of the world, others remain unmoved. For Jews, the Christian message has no resonance, and, rather than mark 2,000 years since Christ's birth, they are now in their 57th century. In Egypt, the millennium coincides with the Islamic year 1420 and even the country's Coptic Christians believe it is only 1716. Thailand, a Buddhist country, began its own second millennium 42 years ago, while in China, communist party officials talk earnestly about the 21st century, not parties.

But if you just want to stay in and toast the new millennium with a bottle of bubbly, you'll be reassured to know that there's still plenty of time to get the drinks. The Champagne Information Bureau says there are currently one billion bottles of the golden elixir lying in storage, although it concedes that some vintages might be hard to find.

Research by Adrian Morrison

Warning from the profit of doom

Warren Clarke is happy to upset Bristolians in a series exposing their role in the slave trade, writes Anthea Gerrie

WITH his pugnant scowl and jutting jaw, Warren Clarke looks like a man permanently ready for a punch-up. But it is only now, nearly 30 years after he first laid on the agro as one of Malcolm MacDowell's henchmen in *A Clockwork Orange*, that he has actually got into a fight.

It comes from an unexpected quarter. The actor's opponents are the burghers of Bristol, enraged at his determination to expose the city's secret past - that its prosperity was built on the slave trade. "Of course there were slaves," he says. "Of course they were heavily involved. This was Britain's Holocaust, yet it isn't even taught in our schools."

He is as passionate about the is-

ssue when we meet in a Soho lunch club as he was last December in Bristol, when the BBC drama *A Respectable Trade*, in which Clarke plays the boorish, upwardly mobile slave trader, Josiah Cole, was premiered in a city still in denial that its prosperity was built on the profits of human cargo.

It is this refusal to accept the validity of definitive documentation that angers him.

"The series doesn't tell any lies; it's set in Bristol because that was a major port of entry for this 'respectable' trade the whole nation was involved in. Other cities were involved - Liverpool heavily - but Liverpool has acknowledged its involvement in a very open way."

The *Bristol Evening Post* is owned by the Merchant Venturers, who as former slave trade monopolists come over as chief villains of the BBC programme, and they took up cudgels when Clarke asserted that the city's history deserved full exposure, saying: "Cities like Bristol became stinking rich because of the slave trade". His name was blazed across the front page.

The four-part series is adapted from her own novel by Philippa Gregory, who was born in Africa, but raised in Bristol. She discovered an unknown story.

"I have a history PhD and I did-



n't know about this - like most conventionally educated people I thought slavery was something that happened in Africa... I discovered there were 20,000 runaway slaves in London alone, which implies that there were a lot more that hadn't run away."

Clarke was won over to *A Re-*

spectable *Trade* by the fact that "it is a beautiful love story, but at the same time it's a powerful tale that hasn't been told before. It covers dodgy ground. This country made fortunes out of slavery. The only thing that was cheap was black people's lives. If a slave was ill on board a ship, they just threw him over-

board. That's how they thought. It's very shocking."

It is not difficult to paint Clarke as a hully-bully.

At 50, he still looks every inch the Droog, as menacing in his expensive soft black kid jacket as he was circa 1971 in his red lipstick and bowler hat. He treats every interview

Reaping riches: Warren Clarke plays Bristol slave trader Josiah Cole in the new BBC series *A Respectable Trade*, one of three shows Clarke is currently starring in.

as a sparring match, glowering over his white wine and puffing defensively on his cigarette. But Clarke has mellowed somewhat since he told his Manchester headmaster to "sod off" when advised to drop the idea of acting in favour of a more suitable profession for a secondary modern boy like plumbing.

Today he still looks tough but speaks softly, with self-deprecating humour. He is humble about his success to the point of insecurity.

"Am I becoming boring?" he asks anxiously when reflecting that not for the first time he is hitting British television screens in triplicate.

A Respectable Trade comes in the wake of his return in *Dad's Army* and *Pascoe*, and will be followed soon by a satire on BBC management, *In the Red*. Unlike other charismatic middle-aged British television stalwarts bypassed by the movies, Clarke's big-

Despite his small screen omnipresence he relishes the fact that he still looks like a van driver and is therefore forever being greeted by people who find his face familiar without having the foggiest idea how they know him.

"They'll look at me walking down the street and say Hiya - but in fact nobody knows who I am."

He would like to do more comedy, he says, harking back to an obscure television series called *Sleepers*, which he co-produced as well as starring in as a Russian spy. "I've got an American award for it on my wall," he says.

But he actually has no idea what he will do next. Let alone a game plan for the future: "When I started out at 15 and a half going off to rep it was a joke, really. I told my mother: 'Don't worry, if I haven't made it by the time I'm 20 I'll give up. I never thought I'd still be working at this age; in fact I didn't even think I'd be this age.'"

Perhaps middle age is his Achilles heel; he feels it so acutely that he felt moved to take extreme action when he imagined he was being mocked by younger actors in *JD*, the television drama about football hooliganism.

"I call it my second *Clockwork Orange*, because I played the leader of a gang and the language was similar. I was in my late forties at the time and conscious of all these young actors like Sean Pertwee looking at me and wondering: 'What's this old fart doing here?' I was some prat from Stonehenge as far as they were concerned."

"One day I went out and got my head shaved, picked up this baseball bat, ran into the room where they were all sitting around and smashed a few tables up."

"It was just my way of saying: 'Hey, we're making the same movie, guys. After that they were all right.'"

As for *A Respectable Trade*, he says he hopes "viewers will come away with a little more knowledge of what we did. There's still an element of racism in this country. The quicker it subsides the better for everyone."

A Respectable Trade begins tomorrow on BBC1 at 9 pm.

It's Cusack who really wears the trousers

A BEDRIDDEN central character nears the end of an existence that's representative of the death of a whole way of life. Figures from the past keep permeating the present and, in language that often seems to overdo its own lyricism, a vanished world is revived, though in an order that often feels loose and arbitrary. The leading role is taken by an actor who rises magnificently to a daunting occasion and turns in a tour de force that stops the heart. Haven't we been here before?

We have - in Sebastian Barry's prize-winning play, *The Steward of Christendom*, that focused on the painful contradictions embodied in the author's great grandfather, Thomas Dunne, the last Catholic head of the Dublin Metropolitan Police and loyal servant of the British Crown before Irish independence. A peculiarly benign case of a drama-

Max Stafford-Clark's 'Our Lady of Sligo' is a tour de force, with a riveting performance from its leading actress. By Paul Taylor

list who has flourished through being well connected, Barry has, over several plays, reclaimed and reimagined the lives of his helpfully colourful ancestors resulting in an alternative history of Irish experience that is tenderly attentive to its misfits and anomalies, the divided and the ambiguously placed.

Now, in *Our Lady of Sligo*, using a memory play format highly reminiscent of *The Steward*, Barry turns his attention to the grandmother he never knew. The first woman to wear trousers in Sligo, Mai was a bold representative of moderate middle-class Catholics whose hopes of inheriting the new independent

Ireland were dashed by the hard-line de Valera and the Sinn Féin revolution. We meet her, aged 53, as she lies dying of cancer in a peeling private ward, wrestling with the unfulfilled promise of the past and visited by the husband (Nigel Terry) who tried to turn himself into a British gentleman - army major, old Nigeria hand etc - only to find that, by the time he'd achieved it, there were no post-Protectors left to impress with this anachronistic persona. Disappointment led to drink which led to the loss of inherited property which led, harrowingly to the loss of a child.

In a haunting, timely and beautifully focused Out of Joint/National Theatre co-production by Max Stafford-Clark, Sinead Cusack is quite superb in the arduous central role. Full of witty scorn and moving desperation, pugnacity and poignancy, it's a performance that succeeds in making brilliant instantaneous shifts between the present grim reality and the various Maits that are conjured up in her morphine-induced reminiscences and fantasies.

There's the sex, the arrogant woman who clings, despite all the alcoholism and failure, to the sense of herself as a hit of a legend, and

resents the humiliating way men like her husband were forced by de Valera to remove their British uniforms on the mail boat when returning from the War. There's the desolately hereaved mother, cradling a tin containing the picture of the baby her drinking may have killed and recalling, in one of Barry's many achingly precise images, its hands "opening and closing like the gestures of a tiny friend". There's a little girl pining for the security of her reliable, top hatted father. A shifting palimpsest: deeply affecting because so irreverent and unsentimental.

The jury may still be out on whether Barry is a natural dramatist as opposed to a gifted writer for whom the stage is just one forum. But, with artists of the calibre of Ms Cusack on board, the distinction becomes a trifle academic.



Brilliant: Sinead Cusack with Nigel Terry in *Our Lady of Sligo*

Photograph: Geraint Lewis

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DAVID LISTER'S ARTS DIARY

DELIGHTED that my seven year old daughter was studying Picasso in primary school I took her on a trip to the Tate Gallery to see Picasso's works in the raw. The Tate has 21 paintings and sculptures and a further 20 prints by Picasso.

And now that the National Gallery has agreed that the Tate should show the 20th century Masters, the Tate is the only place in London to see Picasso in any depth. So how many of his works were on display when we visited? None. Certainly, the annual re-hangs by Tate director Nicholas Serota have made the gallery increasingly exciting and challenging. But surely there should be certain key artists who are always on display, to fulfill the Gallery's educational role, if nothing else.

A Tate spokeswoman told me yesterday that two Picassos, one painting and one sculpture, were now back on display. And she assured me that at the new Tate Gallery of Modern Art at Bankside there will always be Picasso on display. But that will not open until the year 2000. In the meantime, art lovers should be able to find more than two Picassos at the country's best known centre for modern art.

And they should never have to make do with none at all. Perhaps the next meeting of gallery directors should draw up a list of essential artists whose work must always be on display.

Having had a small part in the drama of Nat Tate - namely revealing that author William Boyd had made up the American painter in one of the great literary hoaxes - I became intrigued by the numerous departures from reality in the statements and coverage that ensued. The most widely repeated "fact" in both British and American newspapers was that the New York launch party for Boyd's "biography" took place on 1 April. This, of course, was most fitting: a hoax played on the very day when hoaxes should be played. Except that the launch party was actually on 31 March. But why let a day or even a month get in the way of symbolic purity?

I read with interest a report in the *Sunday Times* that a film starring John Malkovich and Grete Scacchi will be loosely based on events at our very own Royal Opera House. But when the report went on to say there was a physical resen-

blance between Malkovich and the former ROH chairman Lord Chadlington, I was forced to conclude that either there is a shortage of opticians in Wapping, or the story was dictated by Peter Chadlington himself.

It is the constant complaint of theatre managements that punters these days decide on the spur of the moment

whether to go. Less and less do they book in advance. But it seems that Darlingdon is bucking the trend. The box office at the Civic Theatre has just taken an advance of £125,000 for the six-week run of Dick Whittington, which doesn't open until just before Christmas. Perhaps this week's snow confused them into a bout of seasonally-adjusted ticket buying.

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Cricket must face up to glamour

IS IT all over for cricket? Yesterday was the start of the cricket season, but it is no longer the big national watershed it once was. The majority of cricket-watchers already regard the sport, like football, as year-round phenomenon. For them, there has been a lot of rather high-profile cricket played recently in the Caribbean. You have to be a bit of an expert to know that yesterday was the opening of the county cricket season. And you have to be deep into the serious Clem Attlee/John Major minority to have actually attended any of the rain-soaked matches played yesterday.

The days are long gone when the nation meekly accepted that it had two official sports, one for the winter and one for the summer. In any case, the idea of a "national sport", which has a privileged place in the education system and on television, has rightly been superseded by the idea of individual choice in a free market - the rules protecting the "crown jewel" sporting events being designed to offset the monopolistic and unfree aspects of the market in new television channels.

So how can cricket compete in a market where schoolboys almost all want to be soccer stars and clamour to spend large sums of their parents' money on Manchester United's 15th different strip in five years? Premiership football matches are regularly played in stadiums full to capacity, while county cricket players play to empty houses. Cricket in England and Wales is in danger of becoming an old man's game, incapable of supporting a national team which can compete in the world. In recent years the national team has all too easily been dismissed as a joke, although it is worth remembering that there was at one point some genuine uncertainty about the outcome in the West Indies.

The trouble is that the cricketing authorities have not been nearly radical enough, despite being led by Lord McLaren, the former boss of Tesco who ought to know a thing or two about marketing. It is quite bizarre that the England team should go on a tour of the West Indies lasting a full three months, a legacy from the age of ocean liners. And then players like Michael Atherton, England's deposed captain, and Brian Lara, his West Indian opposite number, fly into the drizzle to play for English counties. Not surprisingly, both Atherton and Lara were out for ducks on soggy pitches yesterday.

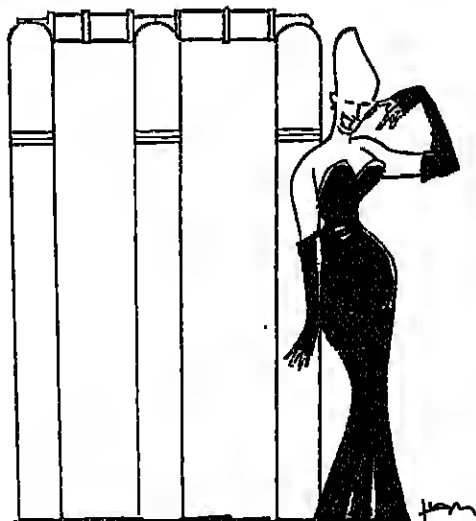
One of the reasons why Glamorgan won the county championship last year and are one of the favourites to win this year is because they are a good-enough team: good enough to beat the others, but not so good that they have a lot of England players who are constantly being called away to play internationals.

The cricketing authorities have been through the mill of endless working parties about restructuring county cricket, but the latest blueprint is little more than another rehash of the same elements. What the sport really needs is to start at the other end, with the cricket that most people actually watch, which is the Test and one-day international matches.

In that sense Kerry Packer had the right idea, perhaps a couple of decades before his time. Cricket needs the big television treatment. It needs glamour, stars and cliffhangers.

Cricket's real problem is the constraint of time. As the most leisurely of sports, it has to compromise most to fit into the squeezed spaces of people's leisure time and the limited hours of broadcast airtime. But the important compromises have already been made, and the purists' defences against coloured outfits, one-day games and floodlighting have all been breached. In the modern multi-sport, multi-channel world, these breaches are all necessary to cricket's survival in competition with pre-packaged American television sports.

Rabid commercialism is not incompatible with the idea of a game being a "national" sport, however, in the sense of selling itself as "the most popular". Soccer has shown the way in this country and American football and baseball have demonstrated it to excess in the United States. But if cricket is to retain a claim to any sort of primacy, it is going to have to take its television audience more seriously.



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Secrets of Blair's sofa Cabinet

ANY constitutional expert will tell you that the governance of Britain lies not in Parliament or in the Cabinet but that the really important decisions are taken in Cabinet committee. Now open government has taken another faltering step and the latest list of memberships has appeared on the 10 Downing Street website (which gives the first clue to where power rests).

The temptation to go in for beauty-contest analysis is too great to resist. For the record then, Peter Mandelson is still top, despite not yet being a member of the Cabinet, sitting on 15 of the 27 committees. He is followed by John Prescott on 14, Gordon Brown 13, Jack Straw 12, Lord Irvine 11, and Robin Cook on 10. Tony Blair himself is only on four, which is curious for a prime minister accused of being such a control freak and centraliser.

It is hard to avoid the conclusion that, just as real decision-making moved out of Cabinet, it is now moving beyond Cabinet committees. Following the controversies of the last year, it would seem that the real decisions are made on the sofas in the back room of Number 10, and the real committee that matters is the informal group around the Prime Minister: Alastair Campbell, Peter Mandelson, Jonathan Powell and Derry Irvine. Of these, only Mr Mandelson is an elected politician.

What should be on the Internet, if we really were to have open government, would be the daily lists of those who have waited upon the prime ministerial sofa.

Help for Iraqis

PLEASE FIND enclosed a cheque for the sum of £5,000 in support of your appeal to help Iraq's innocent children. We want to take this opportunity to emphasise the distinction that Kuwaitis make between the people of Iraq and the regime of Saddam Hussein.

This distinction has been manifested in several ways. For example, in 1995, during his official visit to the UK, the Amir of Kuwait donated £500,000 to the AMAR Appeal that Emma Nicholson set up to help the destitute Iraqi refugees in southern Iran. The Amir also called for a joint effort on the part of the Arab governments to find ways to get food and medical supplies directly to the Iraqi people, without having to go through Saddam's regime.

The Kuwait Red Crescent Society regularly provides aid to Iraqi refugees in Iran and has also sent relief to the Kurds in Northern Iraq. These unpublicised humanitarian initiatives preceded all others from the Middle East.

The international community as a whole has shown great concern for the Iraqi people, but such concern has constantly met Saddam Hussein's intransigence and delaying tactics. The report of the UN Commission that was set up to assess the living conditions of ordinary Iraqis led to Security Council Resolution 706 of 15 August 1991. This allowed the Iraqi government to export \$1.6bn worth of oil every six months.

The Iraqi dictatorship, however, refused the application of this and subsequent "oil-for-food-and-medicine" resolutions in a deliberate effort to use the suffering of the Iraqi people as an instrument of blackmail to pressurise the international community into removing the sanctions completely. Saddam aimed to achieve this before the UN Special Commission completed its work of dismantling his weapons of mass destruction.

In fact, it was only after the suffering and hardship began to undermine his position by affecting the state apparatus, which he relies on to maintain his power, that Saddam agreed to implement the "oil-for-food" resolutions.

Please accept this donation as symbolic of our deep concern for the protracted and dreadful suffering of the Iraqi people, who are the victims of and helpless pawns in Saddam Hussein's relentless game plan. Dr SAAD AL-AJMI

Director
Kuwait Information Centre
Embassy of the State of Kuwait
London SW7

Legal heroin

THE Rev Peter Green has called on the Government "to consider legalising heroin" (report, 15 April).

Heroin has never been illegal in the UK. It is used regularly in the treatment of terminal pain. The 1967 Act and accompanying regulations do not make the prescribing of heroin for addicts illegal, but restricted such prescribing to those doctors with a licence from the Secretary of State. It was the reduction of heroin prescribing, on the advice of certain doctors at the Department of Health, which led to the present situation.

Where doctors have reverted to the Rolleston principles, which governed British heroin policy from the 1920s until the late 1960s, and have prescribed heroin, the crime rate, the incidence of HIV infection and in some cases the rate of new addicts have declined significantly. By contrast, the policy of prohibition has, as some of us warned 30 years ago, led to the escalation of the criminal market. In spite of earlier warnings, Britain has followed American policies in this area where they have most conspicuously failed.

Heroin is a safe drug when administered in clean conditions. Having worked with heroin addicts for 35 years, a community that was once known from heroin as such, I have known hundreds who have died from the adulterated material, the impurities, and the social conditions in which the illicit material is taken. The case for bringing heroin back within the framework of what we were once proud to call the "British system" is a strong one.

Apart from an information pack produced by the Board for Social Responsibility in 1986, the last publication on drugs from an official Church of England source was my own booklet *The Drug Subculture: a Christian Analysis*, in 1969, which warned of the dangers of abandoning heroin prescribing. Scrutiny of the General Synod index of papers for the period from 1975 onwards yields no reference to drugs at all. In the absence of any official view, Fr Green's view is therefore one Anglican viewpoint which hopefully will contribute to a long-overdue debate.

The Rev KENNETH LEECH
St Boniface's Church
London EC3

I AGREE entirely with the Rev Peter Green. In fact, I think heroin should also be taxed and the revenue

used to treat and rehabilitate addicts and to educate children about the dangers of heroin and other drugs (including alcohol). If they then chose to go ahead and use drugs, at least they would be making an informed choice (albeit a stupid one) and they wouldn't be criminalised for it.

SUE McDONNELL
Ulrecht, Netherlands

BEFORE we get carried away into legalising heroin we need to acknowledge the innate weakness of human nature. When abortion became legalised and contraceptives freely available the result was a tenfold increase in the number of unwanted conceptions. Self-discipline is not our strong point and we need structures to help us avoid addictions that do not solve our search for lasting happiness.

M W MARWOOD
Wymondham, Norfolk

AFTER years of pretending that cannabis is no better than heroin we

now have a generation of children who appear to believe that heroin is no worse than cannabis. Why is anyone surprised?

JONATHAN JONES
Oxford

Glass houses

SEAN O'GRADY was clearly so carried away by his thesis ("Nothing new under the Dome", 16 April) that he has left us with the delightful image of Paxman (sic) building the Crystal Palace of 1851.

I have no idea how Joseph Paxton would have measured up as a television interviewee, had that medium been available to him. But I do know that his magnificent building silenced the prophets of doom who forecast disaster for the Great Exhibition in 1851. Richard Rogers' great Dome in Greenwich will, I am sure, have a similar effect on today's Jeremiahs.

NICK RAYNSFORD MP
(Greenwich and Woolwich, Lab)
House of Commons



Mariam Hamza, the four-year-old girl whose arrival in Britain this week for leukaemia treatment played a powerful symbol of the Iraqi people's suffering
Photograph: Peter Macdiarmid

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Post letters to Letters to the Editor and include a daytime telephone number
Fax 0171 293 2056; e-mail: letters@independent.co.uk E-mail correspondents are asked to give a postal address. Letters may be edited for length and clarity.

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NICK RAYNSFORD MP
(Greenwich and Woolwich, Lab)
House of Commons

QUOTE UNQUOTE

"In opposition, I found toadying Tories creepy. I wouldn't have expected Labour MPs to be the same, but they are" — Clare Short, Secretary of State for International Development.

"Some men dash for the shelter of a local hostelry at the first gathering clouds of a domestic argument. Not me. I slip out quietly and head for the local Homebase, where I scan the shelves until I think the coast is clear at home" — Terry Major-Ball.

"Buckingham Palace is, frankly, ugly and cold, with an unpleasant sort of design. It is not the sort of

place you would take to your heart and it should be destroyed" — Barry Sheerman, Labour MP, who is launching a Millennium Destruction Challenge.

"William Hague's announcement that he stays away from church most weeks must offer the best hope yet for a new religious revival" — Auberon Vaughn.

"Tony Banks has gone through fascinating changes as he accepts new responsibilities. We might just discover he is a repressed Spurs fan" — Arturo Varchevker, Psychoanalyst, on the Sports Minister, a devoted Chelsea supporter.

Lessons from Ulster

THERE ARE two features of interest in the proposals for Northern Ireland.

The electoral system for the Northern Ireland Assembly is the single transferable vote, which enables electors to choose between candidates as well as parties, while retaining the geographical link between members and their constituencies.

There is to be a human rights commission to provide an affordable mechanism for people to assert their rights under the European Convention on Human Rights once this has been enacted into domestic law.

Why are the rest of us in the UK being denied these benefits?
PHILIP GOLDENBERG
Woking, Surrey

IF THE Unionist hardliners succeed in wrecking the Northern Ireland peace process, may we then have a referendum here to decide if the province should remain in the United Kingdom?

J W BELL
Ilkley, West Yorkshire

IAN PAISLEY is most fully himself when he says "No". Perhaps some smart drafting of the referendum question might help. How about "Do you reject the peace agreement?"

SEAN MACKEN
Harrow, Middlesex

Nightingales are back

IT MAY be true that nightingales are becoming generally more scarce (report, 16 April), but the reverse seems to be the case in this area. Several can usually be heard on and around Layer Breton Heath, south of Colchester, from early May onwards, which has happened only in the last 10 years or so.

Essex Naturalists' Trust reserve at Fingringhoe Wick on the Colne estuary is a very well-known nightingale haunt. Some appear to have forgotten their skulking habits: they will continue to sing from small oak trees, clearly visible in broad daylight, often within feet of the observer.

TIM DENNIS
Birch, Essex

Lonely dogs

SO THE growing number of the nation's dogs who are believed to be suffering from separation anxiety are to be treated with drugs to enable them to accept the long absences of their owners at work (report, 16 April). How long, one wonders, will it be before the nation's childcare "experts" advocate a similar course of action for the increasing number of children under three who, being deposited for long hours in day nurseries whilst their mothers are "at work", are also at risk of developing both separation anxiety and attachment disorder.

Mrs CHALEXANDER
Brentwood, Essex

List in 'Time'

YOU TAKE *Time* magazine to task for its "all-white, North Atlantic" quintet of leaders and revolutionaries who most influenced world events this century (leading article, 6 April). *Time* in fact named 20 such leaders and they include Mohandas Gandhi, Ho Chi Minh, Ayatollah Khomeini, Mao Tse-tung, Nelson Mandela, the Unknown Rebel (of Tiananmen Square) and Martin Luther King.

CHRISTOPHER REDMAN
Editor
Time Atlantic
London WC2

Moore is less

I REVELLED in Tom Lubbock's assault on the inflated reputation of Henry Moore (14 April). I have always maintained that we needed Moore like we needed a hole in the head.

BEVIS HILLIER
London WC2

هناك من لا يصلح



fish food

ke stab
Jack



Do you need a First Minister or a Mayor? I'm available ...



DAVID
AARONOVITCH
SUBMITS A JOB
APPLICATION

IT'S Trevor Phillips' fault for fanning around. My fellow columnist and old friend has had plenty of time to confirm or deny that he wants to be the first Mayor of London, and has steadfastly refused to be drawn. Well, sir, I am all very well, but time is running out. Someone needs to mount a convincing challenge to Lord Archer's burgeoning campaign; someone who is the novelist's equal in charisma and intellect. And that, someone, dear readers, I would humbly submit, is me.

I should say, from the outset, that the mayoralty of the capital is not the only office that I will be contesting. One of the many achievements of the current government since the election has been to create a number of intriguing posts for men and women of a particular talent. There are many of us who recognise that we are not cut out to be, say, Prime Minister or Chancellor of the Exchequer. The sums of money are too large, the problems too intractable, the evenings too cluttered with celebrities.

But neither can we stomach the sense of futility and powerlessness which must be the common experience of all but the most deluded of back bench MPs. So we have been searching for the happy medium, the job that confers just sufficient puissance, prestige and reward to motivate, without requiring one to meet with Benjamin Netanyahu or Bernie Ecclestone.

Thanks to Mr Blair there will shortly be no fewer than four such positions available, all of them attractive in their own way. There is the First Ministership of Scotland. And who (if you will forgive the play on words) would not want to be the first First Minister of such an attractive country? Unless, of course, one was already the First Secretary of the Welsh Assembly in Cardiff. Both will inhabit nice, purpose-built new offices and have a few billions to spend, while not having to

worry about armies and chemical warfare. Penultimately (though we should not count our chickens) there looks set to be a First Minister for Northern Ireland.

I am not over optimistic about my chances of winning any of these three Firstships. For a start I am not Welsh, Scots or Northern Irish – and while birth seems to be no impediment for outsiders in London, it appears to be a considerable handicap for Londoners outside. Also I have first to contest – and then to win – seats in the relevant assembly or parliament, and so far I am not having much luck in wooing the electors of Kroydard West, Llandfangel Central or the Giant's Causeway. I am worried too, that the leadership of the Ulster Unionist Party may elude me.

Which leaves London. And what a marvellous job that is! A budget of £3.3bn (enough to make a difference, not so much that you lose track of it), a salary of 90 grand (less than an editor, but more than a columnist) and a staff of 250 (impressive but manageable). Furthermore, in addition to the two main functions (getting tough with motorists and trying to attract the Olympics to London), the Mayor is charged with "promoting biodiversity". Well, I can hardly think of anything that I'd rather promote.

So why me? I am a Londoner who has lived in the capital so long that I've even managed a stint south of the river. I often appear on television (though always after midnight, for some reason) and am familiar with its little tricks and artifices. I am a reasonable public speaker which, given the stipulation that "there will be a six-monthly opportunity for voters to question the Mayor directly", is not unimportant.

My manifesto will include commitments to pedestrianise the whole area from Knightsbridge in the west to the City in the east, to charge motorists from the suburbs £20 a time for entering London at all (the revenue raised to be spent on new cycle-only roads), and to outlaw company parking altogether. I will also establish London at the Cutting Edge of the new global information economy, though I am working on the details of that right now.

So why am I telling you all this? Well, because I need your support. Though journalists wishing to go into politics are not as rare as they used to be, they still face a great deal of suspicion from conventional politicians. Look at how nasty that appalling MP Diane Abbott has been about Trevor, writing him off as a broadcaster and journalist, who has done nothing more than run the National Union of Students. Maybe Diane, but that still puts him up one big one on you!

Also, like Tony Blair, I am not over-encouraged of the Labour Party, whose backing I need to be able to win. Unfortunately, unlike Tony Blair, I am therefore not a member of the Labour Party (my mother always said that I had a tendency towards pedantry). Which means that I have somehow to convince the National Executive Committee of the Labour Party that it would be a good idea were they to make me their candidate. A tall order, eh?

But not if you help me. If every reader of this column writes to The Prime Minister, c/o Alastair Campbell, 10, Downing St, etc, and urges him to throw his weight behind my mayoral campaign, I think I can do it. Really.

So remember – "double A for London". Thank you.

Does any movie have the right to call this brave man a coward?



TREVOR
PHILIPS

TITANIC LIES IN FICTION

IF YOU were defamed, what would your reputation be worth? Or to put it precisely, what sort of damages would a court award? Nelson Mandela's would probably get a sum equal to the Bank of England's gold reserves; Bill Clinton might get the price of a good night out at Stringfellow's; Jonathan Aitken would almost certainly have to pay back a large whack of his fortune, since his reputation is now a minus. It's a good game: but for the relatives of the first officer of the Titanic it has become a rather grim one.

The young man, named William Murdoch, died on the original boat. In the movie he is portrayed as a craven coward, panicked into shooting two passengers, and then himself. The truth is that Murdoch was apparently as brave as they come, and acquitted himself with honour in the evacuation. He saved several lives and even gave up his own lifebelt so that another could survive. His family has demanded that his reputation be restored by the film's makers. This seems only reasonable; it appears that they told the filmmakers that they had got it wrong before the production was shot, yet no changes were made to the script. As a result there are now literally hundreds of millions of people who probably believe that Murdoch was a villain, and who, were they ever to meet any of his relatives, would treat him accordingly.

The task of making recompense should not be huge for such a successful movie. The family wanted a correction at the end of the video. What they got was an apology and a small donation to First Officer Murdoch's memorial in his home town of Dalbeattie. The family and local people are naturally dissatisfied. Surely, any man or woman's memory is worth more than such a small gesture. However these are the days of historical revisionism in the service of entertainment. A shudder went through me when I heard that Hollywood's arch-conspiracy theorist, Oliver Stone, plans to "do" Martin Luther King next. I can't imagine



The real, brave, William Murdoch, First Officer on the Titanic Frank Ryan

one who will be in the firing line for that: the CIA, LBJ, the KKK, and Malcolm X probably. Yes, Malcolm died first, but in a Stone movie anything is

be afforded the benefit of the doubt? I know that this would be a hard one to sell to the victims of Pol Pot or Adolf Hitler; but even for those who seem to

southern sassenachs of Soho. In its details this is a complex argument. But the truth that there is inequity is undeniable, and that is perhaps as much as

I myself have become a minor villain in Scotland this week merely for pointing out that the country's citizens do carry a rather large premium in public expenditure

possible.

But historical revisionism doesn't have to be all bad; perhaps instead of tearing down heroes, we might occasionally benefit from trying to reassess, even understand those we have dismissed as evil beyond redemption. How many historical villains could be rehabilitated if we applied the process of the courts to their reputations?

Could Judas Iscariot now go to a heavenly judge and claim that he was misunderstood? After all, he may genuinely have thought he was doing the right thing. And anyway, he was part of the plan dreamed up by the Big Man himself.

Is there any candidate for public obloquy who should not

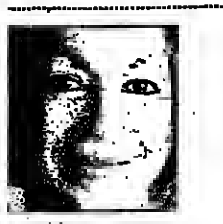
be open and shut cases, should we not from time to time revisit the great evils of our history, if only to reassure ourselves that we have not so degraded our values that we have started to forgive the unforgivable? I would not argue for endless *Trials of ...*, but having been involved in one such "trial" in the last few days (that of Enoch Powell, by no means a simple black and white case) I can say that such reassessments can be surprisingly illuminating.

I myself seem to have become a minor villain in Scotland this week merely for pointing out that the country's citizens carry a rather large premium in public expenditure – they get some 30 per cent more out of the public purse than do the soft

I should expect to get across. However, having spent the week being treated as though I had personally applied the executioner's blade to William Wallace's neck, I am beginning to have my doubts about the wisdom of bothering to say anything even remotely complex in public. The fact that it's complex doesn't make it untrue; but public debate is now pointed in bright, bold, primary colours with no room for texture or subtlety. So he it.

Of course, we need to treat real people with integrity and sensitivity. But imagining that we can eliminate human evil, weakness, and frailty by shutting our eyes to their presence is the sort of thinking that drove the Titanic to its doom. We will never avoid icebergs if we tell ourselves that they are not there.

British food is now edible, but in France ...



CLAUDIA
RODEN
THE FOOD
OF NATIONS

WHEN I first came to London in the 1950s to study art at St Martin's I could not believe food could be so awful. I had just spent three years in a Paris lycée as one of the few weekly boarders. The state school catered for 2,000 pupils but we were given wonderful three-course meals with wine every day. On the weekly outings with my brothers and other Egyptian students we ate for very little money delicious food at little bistros you could then find on every corner.

Things have changed so much in both Britain and France that some people think the situation is reversed. But British food really came so far in our new "cool Britannia" that

it now surpasses that of our French neighbours.

From the Middle Ages when French cooks headed the kitchens of the royal courts of Europe up to the Eighties, when every embassy and every grand restaurant in the world offered a French menu, France has dominated the cooking of the planet. Visitors fell in love with the country because its food was the best they had ever eaten.

But now the French are worried that the golden age of French cuisine has passed. Italian and other cuisines have replaced it in the affections of the Anglo-Saxon world, and while our burgeoning restaurant scene in London is exploding with extraordinary vitality, restaurants in Paris have been going through their worst times. The American press regularly proclaims that they are archaic and stagnant and that San Francisco, New York, Sydney and London are the new capitals of gastronomy.

Our new Anglo-Saxon cuisine is an eclectic magpie cuisine of ideas and flavours plucked from many different countries. The impetus came from *nouvelle cuisine*, and now it responds mainly to fashions in California. It is quick and easy stuff which untrained chefs can easily pick up. It can be delicious and exciting but it can also be a mishmash.

The French restaurant industry has been going through a crisis for several years. This is partly due to the recession.

The French are afraid to spend and costs are high. Starred restaurants have been forced into luxurious tableware and decor and a high staff ratio by Michelin. The great ones now rely on tourists – mainly Americans – for 60 per cent of their trade. Like *haute couture* houses with their ready to wear lines, top restaurants have opened small bistros with their signature changing as little as 120 to 200F. The money they lose in their higher range they make in their lower. The success of those "modern bistros", which have caused a trend and been emulated by young chefs all over Paris, is for the consumers the great silver lining behind the crisis. You can eat wonderful food and drink reasonable wines in a pleasant, unfussy, convivial atmosphere for much less money than in London.

The large brasseries with their quick all-day service, classic menus and animated ambience are also doing very well. The restaurants that have suffered are those who were not quite great and could not keep their prices down. Some have survived by selling artisanal products, lunch time snacks for delivering in offices and ready meals to take home in the evening. But many have been forced to close.

The root of the crisis is not just economic – it is also social. According to Thierry De-manche, head of the Ecole de Cuisine Ferrandi, which is part of the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the rot started in the Sixties when women were liberated, went out to work, and gave up on cooking. Children ate in school canteens and in the fast food establishments that drove out the old neighbourhood bistros, and at home were given tinned or frozen foods. A whole generation grew up without the

memory of good home cooking or what good ingredients taste like. For this generation food is no longer the primary source of pleasure.

The third reason for the crisis is the art of French cooking itself, which has gone through a period of change and trauma, and a crisis of identity. In the Seventies a few top chefs were invited to the World Fair in Japan, and returned with ideas about presentation, which was the origin of *nouvelle cuisine*. At the time, the *Gault et Millau* guide (which is as important as the Michelin) championed the movement and pushed cooks to abandon tradition and invent. Where you could previously go on gastronomic tours through France and eat different foods in each region, you began to find the same things everywhere. Now Henri Gault and Christian Millau say they regret what they have done to French cuisine.

The French became unhappy and wanted their old cuisine back. After a lot of soul searching, manifestos, opinion polls and forums, the overwhelming consensus was to go back to provincial regional French cooking or *la cuisine des terroirs*. *Haute cuisine* is now associated with hackneyed, boring dishes which are over-elaborate and heavy with butter and cream sauces. *Cuisine des terroirs* is a kind of fundamental-

AWARD-WINNING FOOD & DRINK IN THE INDEPENDENT

Claudia Roden was this week awarded the Glenfiddich Award for Food/Book of the Year for her 'Book of Jewish Food' (Viking). Two of the independent on Sunday's food writers, Hugh Fearnley-Whittinghall and Richard Ertlach, also won awards; and Simon Hopkinson, whose beefs about British butchers can be found in today's magazine, won the award for Newspaper/Cookery Writer of the Year.

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Malays' £44m rescues Laura Ashley

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

LAURA ASHLEY, the troubled fashion and home furnishings retailer, was rescued from potential financial collapse yesterday when a Malaysian backer agreed to invest £44m in the business in return for a 40 per cent stake. However, analysts still questioned whether the funding would be sufficient to address

the ailing group's problems. MUI, a Kuala Lumpur-based conglomerate with interests ranging from department stores to cement, is paying 28p per share for 160m new shares. The funds will be used to implement a recovery programme in America, reduce debts and fund capital expenditure.

The company said its poor performance had led to concerns about breaching its banking covenants and that its banks had refused to provide additional facilities in the US beyond 3 May.

Spelling out the seriousness of the group's position, the board said it would be sending a circular to shareholders warning that if investors turned down the rescue package the directors would be "forced to seek an alternative source of finance".

The lifeline came as Laura Ashley reported losses of £25m for last year, debts of £30m and sharp sales declines across its



A Laura Ashley store in west London. The company is striving to reduce price cutting

Photograph: Neville Elder

major markets even though its stores have been slashing prices by up to 25 per cent.

David Hoare, who replaced Ann Iverson as chief executive last year, said: "Obviously the company's record is sobering but we have a good platform and we will take a commercial approach. Some of the things we do will not be very exciting but we believe they will deliver results in the long term."

However, analysts said a turnaround would take time. "It's going to be a very, very long haul," one said. "There is no quick fix and I can't see them making a profit for several years." Another said: "I just wonder if this is enough of a life-

line. It only enables them to close a few of the larger stores in the US that are causing the problems. Something more radical may have been needed but I don't imagine there was a queue of suitors out there."

Sir Bernard Ashley, Laura Ashley's widow, has said she will vote in favour of the deal as has Jusco, the company's Japanese investor. The deal means that three investors will control 70 per cent of Laura Ashley shares. MUI will control 40 per cent. Sir Bernard Ashley will see his stake reduced from 35 per cent to 21 per cent and Jusco's stake will fall from 15 per cent to 9 per cent.

Four directors of MUI will

join the Laura Ashley board including the group's chairman and chief executive, Dr Kay Peng Khoo. He said: "Laura Ashley is one of the world's leading brands and has clear potential despite the recent setbacks. We will be a long-term investor and look forward to helping turn around."

Mr Hoare said the group would remain in garments and home furnishings. However it will seek to become a lifestyle brand and continue its policy of licensing and franchising the Laura Ashley name for products such as perfume, sunglasses, watches and paint. The rescue cash injection came alongside a dismal set of

results. The figures were damaged by exceptional charges of £24m including £9m for the closure of the group's manufacturing operations and £9.4m for the closure of six larger format stores in the US which were the brainchild of Ann Iverson. In two years she steered the group towards opening 26 per cent more space in America. But sales grew by just 4 per cent.

Like for like sales were down by 15 per cent across the group in the first 10 weeks for the year with a 20 per cent fall in the US. Sales have fallen as the stores move away from price cutting. Laura Ashley shares closed 2p higher at 35.5p. They stood at 219p 18 months ago.

Green light for Texas Energy bid

By Peter Thal Larsen

TEXAS UTILITIES, the US electricity firm, was yesterday cleared to pursue its £4.4bn bid for The Energy Group, the coal and electricity firm which owns Eastern Electricity, after Margaret Beckett, trade secretary, decided not to refer the bid to the Monopolies and Mergers Commission.

The decision clears the way for the final stage of the battle for control of Energy, which has been raging for almost a year. Pacificorp, another US utility, has also tabled an offer for the group, although its 820p share cash offer is 20p less than Texas' bid.

Last night, Pacificorp refused to comment on whether it planned to increase its offer. Both bidders effectively have until next Friday to post their final offers to shareholders.

The lack of a response surprised analysts, who said Pacificorp would have been able to plan its response well before the decision was announced.

Energy Group shares jumped 8p to 85.2p as investors anticipated a renewed bidding war. However US institutional investors were also said to be attracted by Texas' Group's, all-share alternative offer, which is currently worth about 86.5p.

In order to receive Mrs Beckett's blessing, Texas pledged to offer the watchdog would be given enough information to regulate Eastern Electricity and that the company would be given sufficient resources for the introduction of electricity competition in September.

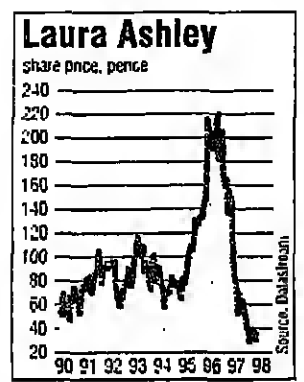
Energy Group was created as part of the demerger of the Hanson conglomerate, and combines the businesses of Eastern Electricity and Peabody, the coal producer.

Erie Nye, chairman and chief executive of Texas, said he was "delighted" with the decision, adding that Texas' offer "clearly represents superior value for Energy Group shareholders."

Pacificorp and Energy have been locked in a battle since February, when Pacificorp tabled an agreed 765p a share bid after the Monopolies and Mergers Commission ruled that it could buy the company. That was trumped by Texas. The two increased their offers until reaching the current stalemate.

Energy Group's board is refusing to recommend either bid until the two parties have made their final offers.

Both sides have also been buying shares. Texas owns 21.96 per cent of Energy, while Pacificorp has an 8.8 per cent stake.



Source: Bloomberg

US deficit adds pressure on Japan

By Diane Coyle
Economics Editor

A BIG INCREASE in the US trade deficit in February prompted new calls for action by the Japanese government from US officials yesterday. Weaker demand for American goods by Japan and other Asian countries took the shortfall between exports and imports to the highest level since the late 1980s.

Fear of intervention by the Bank of Japan to support the yen kept the reaction in the currency markets muted. The dollar fell further against the yen, however, with traders seeing the ¥132 as the level that would bring the Bank of Japan back into the market.

The pound fell back with the dollar, losing a penny to reach just under Dm3.05. The sterling

index fell 0.5 to 107.6. Gordon Brown repeated yesterday the Government's commitment in principle to joining the single European currency if it is in Britain's economic interest, subject to a referendum "early in the next parliament". In a speech in New York, the Chancellor said: "Our strategy is to prepare and then decide."

A further drop in the Tokyo stock market overnight, the result of concerns about the weak Japanese economy and disappointment about the outcome of this week's G7 meeting, took share prices lower in London yesterday. The FTSE 100 index ended 80 lower at 5,922.2, the first time in more than two weeks it had closed below the 6,000 mark.

However, Wall Street remained quiet after Thursday's 86 point fall. Although investors

took profits on internet stocks, which had sizzled higher earlier in the week, the Dow Jones index was just 3 points lower at 9,073.58 by late morning. Fresh, though vague, rumours of a merger involving American Express Bank helped prevent shares declining.

Fears that the long-awaited

stock market correction had arrived therefore proved premature. But analysts noted that the meeting of G7 finance ministers earlier in the week had expressed some concern that shares were overvalued and could face a sharp fall.

Yesterday's figures showed that the US deficit on trade in

goods and services climbed to \$12.1bn in February, approaching the record shortfalls seen in 1987. The gap in trade in goods with Japan, a politically sensitive figure, increased to \$5.3bn from \$4.4bn in January.

Lower exports provided the main explanation for the disappointing figure. Import vol-

umes climbed by 1 per cent but the strong dollar meant that they fell by 1 per cent in value.

More reassuring were figures showing that growth in industrial output was muted last month, climbing by just 0.2 per cent. Thanks to earlier revisions, industrial production rose at an annual rate of 0.9 per cent in the first quarter of 1998, sharply down from the 7.2 per cent expansion in the final quarter of last year. Capacity use in manufacturing declined to the lowest rate for two years.

With manufacturing slowing and exports also holding back growth, yesterday's figures reassured the financial markets that the Federal Reserve was unlikely to raise short-term interest rates any time soon.

The Bundesbank Council left German interest rates unchanged yesterday.



Gordon Brown, centre, with Eddie George, Bank of England Governor, left, and Fed chairman Alan Greenspan in Washington

Lucky Jim leaves EMI with a £12m payoff More wins bus shelter deal

By Nigel Cope
City Correspondent

EMI yesterday agreed to pay a compensation package of £12m to Jim Fiffeld, the departing head of its music division in the US, just weeks after denying the package would be anywhere near that sum.

The pay-off follows Mr Fiffeld's resignation yesterday and is believed to be a reward for a main board director of a

British public company. It brings to more than £30m the sum that Mr Fiffeld has been awarded by EMI in the last two years in the form of salary, bonuses, share options and contractual payments.

It follows an estimated pay-off of \$50m (£30m) made by EMI last year to Charles Koppelman, head of EMI-Capitol Music in America. However, he was not a main board director and EMI has not confirmed the figure.

Mr Fiffeld is known as "Lucky Jim" because of his lavish pay. His pay-off will include £6.27m for the early termination of his contract. He will also receive immediate payment of £6.15m for pension contributions. He will be able to exercise his share options, which are worth £2m.

The pay-off comes just weeks after he was given £8.7m of shares as a result of a "restricted share award". Mr Fiffeld

earned almost £7m last year.

One shareholder said the pay-off was only what Mr Fiffeld was entitled to under the terms of his contract but that the package was symptomatic of a wider issue. "The fact is that people earn more in America. And as industries become more global, whether it is the music business or pharmaceuticals we are going to keep coming up against this problem."

Mr Fiffeld will not be re-

placed directly but two other board appointments were announced yesterday. Ken Berry, chief executive of EMI recorded music, will join the EMI board along with Martin Bandier, head of EMI's music publishing division. Simon Duffy, finance director, has been appointed joint deputy chairman.

EMI has said it hopes to cover the costs of Mr Fiffeld's package by the closure of its New York office.

By Peter Thal Larsen

MORE GROUP, the outdoor advertising operator facing a bid from Decaux, the French group, is now examining the possibility of putting one of the shelters directly outside its rival's UK head office in West London.

LT-Adshel, More's joint venture with London Transport, has won a multi-million pound eight-year contract from Hammer-smith Council to provide bus shelters throughout the borough.

More won the contract, believed to be worth about £3m, in a competition against Decaux with the help of a new design of stainless steel bus shelters. It is now examining the possibility of putting one of the shelters close to Decaux's headquarters on Goldhawk road. "We'll see if we can put the biggest shelter in London there," said one More employee.

The Office of Fair Trading is examining whether to refer Decaux's bid to the Monopolies

and Mergers Commission. Opponents of the deal argue that it would bring together the two dominant players in the market for street furniture - such as bus shelters and street toilets - giving local authorities no choice of supplier. But Decaux insists this is just one small part of the outdoor advertising market.

Yesterday was the deadline for submissions to the OFT, and the regulator is expected to announce its ruling within the next two weeks.

STOCK MARKETS

Index	Close	Change	Change (%)	52 wk high	52 wk low	Yield (%)
FTSE 100	5922.20	-79.80	-1.33	6150.50	4291.50	3.36
FTSE 250	4519.20	-17.80	-0.39	4567.80	4384.20	2.97
FTSE 350	2847.80	-30.90	-1.08	2898.70	2114.60	3.31
FTSE All Share	2777.16	-30.52	-1.09	2861.12	2089.10	3.29
FTSE SmallCap	1405.70	-2.80	-0.20	1415.30	1225.20	3.24
FTSE Fledgling	1405.70	-2.80	-0.20	1415.30	1225.20	3.24
FTSE AIM	1086.70	0.40	0.04	1095.70	965.90	1.07
FTSE AIM	9085.39	11.95	0.13	9167.76	6617.26	1.34
Dow Jones	9085.39	11.95	0.13	9167.76	6617.26	1.34
Nikkei	15703.80	-179.97	-1.13	15810.73	14488.91	0.97
Hong Kong	11001.32	-186.36	-1.67	11200.31	7900.13	3.35
Dax	5268.75	-55.39	-1.04	5411.07	3325.01	1.34

INTEREST RATES

Short sterling	UK 10 year gilt	US long bond
3 month 1 yr 5 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
UK 7.82 1.10 7.51 0.54 5.78 -1.70 5.68 -1.99	US 5.69 -0.16 5.84 -0.53 5.57 -1.26 5.86 -1.20	Japan 0.67 0.11 0.68 -0.01 1.80 -0.58 2.40 -0.55
Germany 3.64 0.42 3.85 0.55 1.46 -0.55 5.40 -1.22		

Money Market Rates	Bond Yields
Index 3 month 1 yr 5 yr	1 yr 5 yr 10 yr
UK 7.82 1.10 7.51 0.54 5.78 -1.70 5.68 -1.99	US 5.69 -0.16 5.84 -0.53 5.57 -1.26 5.86 -1.20
Japan 0.67 0.11 0.68 -0.01 1.80 -0.58 2.40 -0.55	Germany 3.64 0.42 3.85 0.55 1.46 -0.55 5.40 -1.22

MAIN PRICE CHANGES	Falls
Index Price Oil Day Oil % Chg	Arava 441.00 -34.00 -7.18
Thom 205.00 14.00 7.33	Standard Charter 940.00 -64.00 -6.57
Anglo Group 75.25 3.75 5.17	Albright & Wilson 189.00 -11.00 -5.11
Sainsbury 64.00 3.00 4.92	Perpetual 402.50 -217.50 -5.12
Senior Engineer 219.50 9.50 4.62	

CURRENCIES

\$/£	DM/£	¥/£
1.6850 -0.050 1.6302	1.8085 +0.220 0.6134	114.10 2.80 110.68
D-Mark 3.0478 -0.750 2.8119	D-Mark 1.8085 +0.080 1.7227	Yen 131.87 +0.83 125.94
Yen 222.15 +0.24 205.33	Yen 131.87 +0.83 125.94	
£ index 108.10 +0.00 100.00	\$ index 108.10 +0.00 100.00	

Other Indicators	Change	Yr Ago
Scot Oil (\$)	13.82 0.13 15.97	114.10 2.80 110.68
Gold (\$)	387.75 -0.70 342.55	131.87 +0.83 125.94
Silver (\$)	6.28 0.21 4.84	108.10 +0.00 100.00

TOURIST RATES

Australia (\$) 2.5028	Malta (lira) 0.6401
Austria (schillings) 20.83	Mexican (nuevo peso) 12.89
Belgium (francs) 61.22	Netherlands (guilders) 3.3379
Canada (\$) 2.3652	New Zealand (\$) 2.9172
Cyprus (pounds) 0.8633	Norway (krone) 12.38
Denmark (krone) 11.37	Portugal (escudos) 301.76
Finland (markka) 9.0728	Saudi Arabia (riyal) 6.1686
France (francs) 9.8943	Singapore (\$) 2.5682
Germany (marks) 2.9738	Spain (pesetas) 251.35
Greece (drachmas) 512.75	South Africa (rand) 8.2174
Hong Kong (\$) 1272	Sweden (krone) 12.80
Ireland (pounds) 1.1743	Switzerland (francs) 2.4796
India (rupees) 51.77	Thailand (bahts) 59.63
Israel (shekels) 5.8156	Turkey (liras) 402.025
Italy (lira) 2045	USA (\$) 1.8536
Japan (yen) 220.86	
Malaysia (ringgits) 6.8227	

Rates for indication purposes only
Source: Thomas Cook

Green list for Texas Energy



**JEREMY
WARNER**
ON WHY
COMMUNITARIAN
CAPITALISM MAY
BE THE WAY OF
THE FUTURE
AFTER ALL

Stakeholding gone mad, or is this the future?

HOW ABOUT this for a chairman's statement? "After careful consideration, the board has decided that in future the company will put more emphasis on employment than profit. Our profit margin is going to be 6 per cent - no higher, no lower. If it looks likely we will make more money than expected, then we will take on more orders at lower prices in order to adjust the figure. We are a manufacturing company and the main purpose of what we do is to use facilities and labour in a stable manner and at maximum capacity."

"If we make too much money on what we produce, it drives up the price of other products, which is bad for everyone. The social effects of what we do must be our primary consideration. We will not, I repeat not, give our shareholders precedence. I know that if we were an American company we would come under intense criticism for saying these things, and they get me into trouble with my finance department. But we do not need to advertise to foreigners to get them to buy our stock. If our stock has no appeal for investors, they can sell it straight away. Our employees have no such freedom of choice, and it is primarily for them that we exist."

OK, so no one would say that in a chairman's statement, would they. So shocking would such a thing be for a City or Wall Street audience, that the chairman who did

would be hung from the nearest lamppost - no gold watch, no pay-off, no pension. They think differently in Japan, however, and believe it or not, this is what the chairman of one of Japan's biggest companies, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, did say. And only a few months ago too, so the crisis of the Far East and his own domestic economy has plainly done nothing to change his view of how companies should be run.

Up until recently, it was fashionable to look longingly at these shining examples of communitarian capitalism and question why it was not possible to have it here in Britain too. Socially it seemed so much more acceptable than our own market-driven forms of capitalism. What's more, it seemed to be economically more successful too. While our shipbuilding industry withered and died, Mitsubishi thrived and grew. New Labour came to use companies like it as a model for its vision of a "stakeholder" economy in which companies would come to serve the interests of employees and customers as much as investors.

Then came the meltdown in the Far East, which again focused attention on Japan's own particular economic paralysis. The debate has since swung full circle. The American, free market model seems fully vindicated: the best way of creating prosperity and employment is to allow capital to chase the best returns, to give entre-

preneurs a completely free hand in the pursuit of wealth for the sake of it. Business can only properly serve the community, we now have to accept, if it is selfish and slavishly serves the interests of its shareholders to the exclusion of all else.

Shareholder value has been a persistent mantra throughout my time as a financial journalist, but I don't recall it ever being in quite such strong and vibrant voice as it is today. We've even got a new derogatory term for the communitarian capitalism of the Far East - crony capitalism - and all right-thinking people now condemn it as corrupt, inefficient, and ultimately doomed.

Nothing is for ever, however, and it is testimony to how strongly embedded in the culture and the national psyche of Japan the old ways are that the chairman of Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Kenjiro Aikawa, can still preach this extreme version of stakeholding without so much as a hint of irony. Radical, painful, Western-style liberalisation and reform is meant to be in the air, but most Japanese industrialists would continue to insist that the primary purpose of business is not that of serving shareholders; it is the wider interests of company, community and nation that come first.

No wonder the Japanese stock market is in such bad shape. Even so, this way of thinking will not go away. There are very few lessons from history, but one of them

is that no model remains triumphant for ever. The gospel according to Mr Aikawa will live on and to another time it is going to be rediscovered and reinvented.

It may be that in the distant future, this is actually the corporate model that becomes supreme. Certainly it is hard to imagine the present situation, where corporate profits seem to be grabbing an ever greater share of total wealth, being tolerated for ever. Even with globalisation of national economies, there will eventually be a social and political backlash against the shareholder value purists. No rational human being given a clean sheet of paper would invent an organisation whose sole corporate purpose was to serve the interests of investors; it therefore seems curious that this is the one that the world over, now calls the shots.

The big British company most often cited as closest to the stakeholder ideal is Marks & Spencer. Yet even M&S doesn't really fit the Mitsubishi bill. The philosophy there is not to serve its employees, but to treat employees and customers well so as to better serve the interests of shareholders. This is not quite the same thing, though it may amount to a rather more reasonable compromise between capital and labour than what Mr Aikawa is on about.

A better parallel, though still an inexact one, is with Britain's remaining mutual organisations. With a mutual, the interests

of customers and shareholders are identical, since in most cases it is the customers who own the business. The unwritten contract in most of these organisations is that the benefits of mutual ownership are also shared with employees, usually in higher levels of employment than would otherwise be tolerated. So here we are getting closer to what Mr Aikawa is talking about, an organisation that is willing to go along with periods of uneconomic activity and investment, to tolerate a degree of inefficiency, if that is judged to be in the long-term interests of the company as a whole - employees as well as customers.

Mutual ownership does not translate well into businesses outside financial services. In any case, for this philosophy of business to work in a joint stock company, as it traditionally has done in Japan, requires a level of social cohesion and purpose, and a structure of ownership, which is altogether absent in the Anglo-Saxon world. But never say never. Look long, long into the future, and it may be that capitalism will have moved significantly in this direction, driven there as much by the cause of self preservation as any sense of altruism. The American way will not always rule. It looks unlikely now, but some variation of the Asian model may eventually end up triumphant, even here in the West. But not in our lifetimes.

Liffe members vote to reduce size of board

MEMBERS of Liffe, London's financial futures and options exchange, have voted overwhelmingly to restructure the management. At an extraordinary general meeting on Thursday evening, 88 per cent voted to reduce the size of the board from 34 to 18 or 19, and 99 per cent voted to install a full-time chairman, expected to be paid up to £500,000 a year. Members voted unanimously to cut all links between non-executive directors of the Liffe board and the exchange membership. Liffe management is trying to address a crisis of confidence at the exchange, which has been losing market share to the Deutsche Terminbörse, the German futures exchange.

£1.8m for L&G chief

THE CHIEF EXECUTIVE of Legal & General, the insurance group, was awarded a package worth almost £1.8m in 1997. David Prosser's package included a £1.06m profit on the sale of share options, a salary of £400,000, a cash bonus of £180,000 and a deferred bonus of £80,000. Total board remuneration, excluding pension contributions and gains on share options, rose 18 per cent to £2.4m.

Perpetual down on denial

THE CHAIRMAN of Perpetual, the UK fund manager, denied his 19 per cent stake in the company was for sale. Martyn Arbib said: "I have not been involved in any talks regarding any disposal of my personal shareholding in the company and the recent press speculation is unwelcome." Reports have suggested he was considering selling his stake to Goldman Sachs, the US investment bank. Perpetual shares finished the day down 217.5p at 4027.5p.

UniChem up 11pc

Alliance UniChem, the drugs distributor chaired by the former Chancellor Kenneth Clark, announced an 11 per cent rise in pre-tax profits to £59.2m in 1997. The group is planning to expand in Europe after completing a £280m merger with Alliance Santé, the French group.

Proxy battle for Lonrho

A US money manager is seeking to overturn a recent vote taken by Lonrho, the mining group, to buy back shares and dismantle the group. Adrian Day, president of Global Strategic Management, said US shareholders were not sent proxies to vote.

Akzo to raise £584m

Akzo Nobel, the Dutch chemical group, said yesterday that it was asking shareholders to give it authority to raise an extra 2 billion guilders (£584m), creating speculation that it was about to mount a bid for Courtaulds, the British chemicals group, with which is already holding takeover talks. "We are creating more room for future possibilities, but nothing is planned," a spokesman said.

Shandwick keeps talking

SHANDWICK International, the public relations firm, said it was still in talks regarding a potential takeover of the group. The group said at its AGM that it has a strong new business book which should result in "satisfactory" progress for the second half of the year.

COMPANY RESULTS

	Turnover £	Pre-tax £	EPS	Dividend
Laurel Holdings (F)	344.9m (27.2m)	49.3m (16.23m)	20.87p (4.28p)	(-)
Alliance Unilever (F)	1.71m (1.49m)	59.2m (53.5m)	22.3p (20.2p)	5.7p (5.9p)
Anglo Welsh Group (F)	2.70m (1.41m)	0.366m (0.082m)	12.3p (18.1p)	3.00p (-)

(F) - Final (P) - interim

WHO'S SUING WHO

JOHN WILLCOCK



COOPERS & Lybrand, the Big Six accountancy firm, is being sued by 14 financial institutions who are debenture holders in Resort Hotels, a company which crashed four years ago and which was audited by Coopers.

The plaintiffs, which include Axa Equity and Life Assurance, Commercial Union Life Assurance and Legal & General Assurance Society, are suing Coopers over a rights issue held two years before the company collapsed.

Robert Feld, head of Resort Hotels, was subsequently jailed for eight years for fraud and forgery. Earlier this month Feld had his sentence cut to six years by the Court of Appeal.

In his original trial Feld was found guilty of lying about the hotel chain's financial position, forging documents and boosting a profits forecast to back up

ARM float bonanza

By Peter Thal Larsen

ARM, the computer chip design company based in Cambridge, enjoyed a sparkling debut on the London Stock Exchange yesterday. Shares in the company, which were originally priced at 575p, ended the day at 820p, up 42 per cent, having briefly touched 1,000p.

The flotation means a bonanza for ARM's 300 employees, who between them own a 10 per cent stake in the company which is now worth at least £35m.

The success of the issue demonstrates the growing interest from European investors in technology companies. Although ARM opted for a dual listing on the London and Nasdaq exchanges, a substantial chunk of the shares were taken up by European investors.

The flotation was so popular that Morgan Stanley Dean Witter, the investment bank managing the flotation, twice increased the issue price. The original pricing range was set between 325p and 385p a share.

The company has attracted

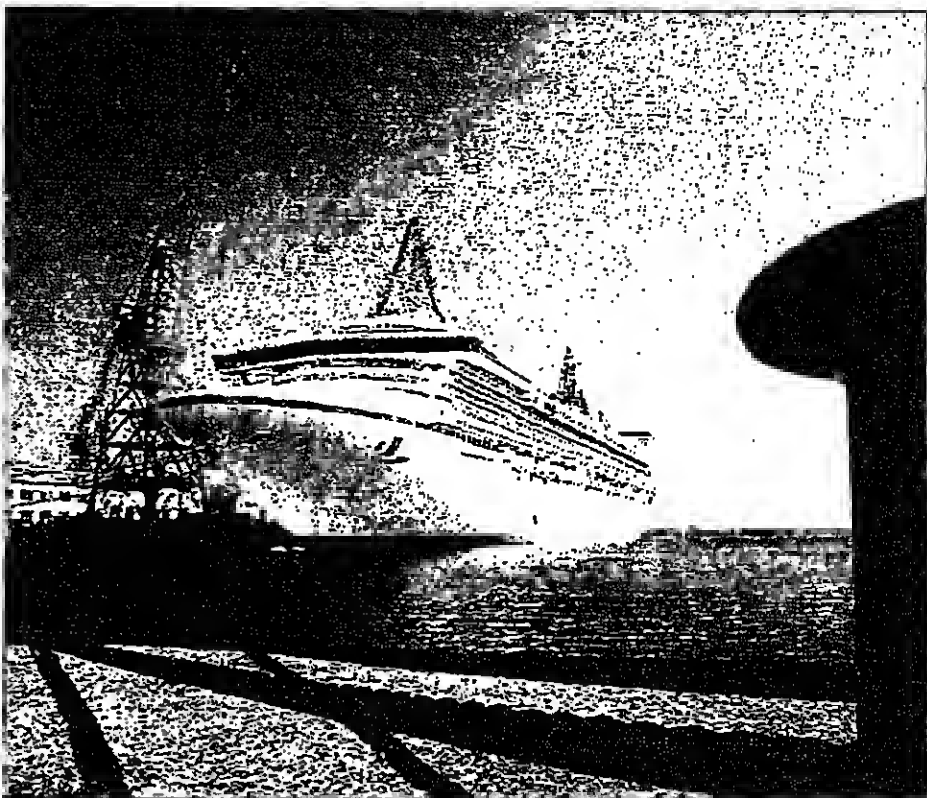
a sky-high share price rating. Last year, ARM made after-tax profits of around £3m on sales of £26.6m. Friday's closing price values the company at more than £375m.

"Nasdaq is a good high-tech market, but the majority of our employees are in the UK," said Robin Saxby, ARM's chief executive. "Wherever we have been we've had a very high level of interest."

ARM designs powerful, efficient processor chips, and then licenses the designs to chip manufacturers. Due to their low cost and efficient use of electricity, they are particularly popular with manufacturers of portable computers and mobile phones, which depend on battery power.

Chips designed by ARM are used in Psion's new Series 5 palm-top computer, and the company has also licensed its technology to Philips, the Dutch electronics giant, for use in its new "smart" mobile phone.

ARM was originally the chip design arm of Acorn, the British computer manufacturer. In 1990, it was spun off as a separate company.



Cruiser: All 2,600 berths in P&O's Grand Princess are booked until the end of the season

Bon voyage, baby boomers

THE BIGGEST cruise ship in the world, Grand Princess, is poised to make her maiden voyage for P&O with all 2,600 berths booked from now to the end of the season in October, writes Terry Maculister. The booming demand from US holidaymakers for the \$430m (£265m) vessel, which starts its first Mediterranean cruise schedule on May 16, underlines the buoyant nature of cruising worldwide. Latest statistics from P&O Cruises released yesterday show that in the first three months of this year forward bookings and yields were well ahead of the same period of 1997. P&O's share price rose 5p to 905p as brokers like HSBC Securities recommended P&O after it said booked revenues and yields for the rest of the 1998 were also advancing. The ship-owner said the average age of passengers on its Princess Cruises subsidiary has slipped below 50 for the first time. This suggests young American "baby boomers" are taking over from the traditional "blue rinse" brigade

Hambros closer to break-up

By Lea Paterson

THE BREAK-UP of Hambros, the City institution which has fallen from grace in the last few years, moved a step nearer yesterday when it announced the demerger of Hambros Countrywide, the estate agency and life assurance company.

Sir Chips Keswick, Hambros' chairman, said the board was in discussions with "certain interested parties who may be prepared to make a public offer for Hambros" following the Countrywide demerger, due to be completed in June.

The City believes Hambros is aiming at a sale price of more

than 300p a share, valuing the group at more than £530m, although analysts believe 280p to 300p may be more realistic.

Hambros said any offer was unlikely to include Hambros Insurance Services (HIS), HIS has appointed the financial advisers DLJ Phoenix Securities to "assist in reviewing all options".

Hambros began the break-up process at the end of last year when it sold its core banking activities to Société Générale (SocGen), the French bank, for £300m. At the time, Sir Chips said the group decided to break itself up because the board "saw the need to the conclusion that we were not making any significant re-

turn to our shareholders".

Hambros has had a series of disappointing results, and its name was tarnished by its involvement in Andrew Regan's failed attempt to take over the Co-operative Wholesale Society (CWS).

After the Countrywide demerger, Hambros' assets will include the £231m cash surplus realised on the SocGen deal, a 44 per cent stake in Guinness Flight Hambro Asset Management (Guinness Flight), a 52 per cent stake in HIS and a diverse direct investment portfolio consisting of some 50 separate holdings. These include a 18 per cent stake in Conery & Barrow, the wine bar,

and a 2.5 per cent stake in Centaur, the publishing group.

Sources say it is "a possibility" the remaining assets, with the exception of HIS, will be sold as a single group, although speculation is mounting there will be a management buy-out at Guinness Flight.

Guinness Flight is a joint venture between Hambros and Guinness Mahon, the UK banking group that was recently bought by Investec of South Africa.

Hambros is currently understood to be talking to a "handful" of interested parties, and it is hoped the business details published yesterday will attract other potential bidders.

A FIRM called International Currency Brokers is suing Shell UK over the ground floor shop and premises at 78 Strand, London, where Shell is ICB's landlord. ICB claims Shell UK "wrongfully purported to forfeit the plaintiff's tenancy by peaceable re-entry on 13 March 1998."

The defendant has secured the premises against the plaintiff and is thereby a trespasser and in wrongful occupation of the premises. ICB demands damages for trespass and breach of covenant. It issued the writ last month through Flaggate Fielder.

Listen to this man



The 1998 McCormick Lecture

Martin Sorrell is Group Chief Executive of WPP Group, which in 1997 generated a group annual turnover of £7.3bn. Under his leadership WPP has become the world's leading communications services group, employing 22,000 people, within 30 companies, in 90 countries.

In recent years the role of WPP Group has expanded from one of traditional holding company to value added parent company, adding distinct value to clients and even greater opportunities and rewards for its people. By adding value to the centre WPP believe they can demonstrate tangible results.

Martin Sorrell is also an enthusiastic supporter of The Association of MBAs and as a part of the McCormick Lecture series, will be giving a talk explaining how WPP is working to ensure that for them, the whole adds up to more than the sum of its parts. The talk will be held on April 20th, 1998.

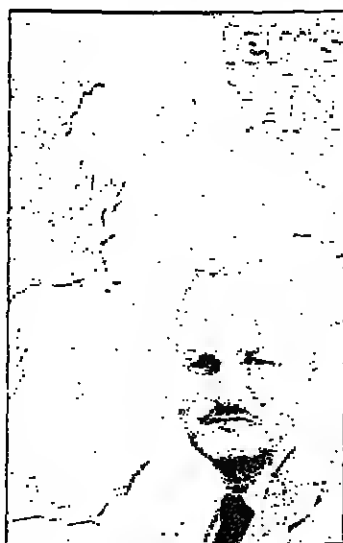
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UK Equity Growth & Income									
Company	Price	Dividend	Yield	Market Cap	Volume	Change	High	Low	Open
Admiral Group	12.50	0.00	0.00	1,200,000	100,000	+0.10	12.60	12.40	12.50
Admiral Insurance	15.00	0.00	0.00	1,500,000	120,000	+0.15	15.10	14.90	15.00
Admiral Property	18.00	0.00	0.00	1,800,000	140,000	+0.20	18.10	17.90	18.00
Admiral Services	20.00	0.00	0.00	2,000,000	160,000	+0.25	20.10	19.90	20.00
Admiral Transport	22.00	0.00	0.00	2,200,000	180,000	+0.30	22.10	21.90	22.00
Admiral Leisure	25.00	0.00	0.00	2,500,000	200,000	+0.35	25.10	24.90	25.00
Admiral Retail	28.00	0.00	0.00	2,800,000	220,000	+0.40	28.10	27.90	28.00
Admiral Finance	30.00	0.00	0.00	3,000,000	240,000	+0.45	30.10	29.90	30.00
Admiral Energy	32.00	0.00	0.00	3,200,000	260,000	+0.50	32.10	31.90	32.00
Admiral Media	35.00	0.00	0.00	3,500,000	280,000	+0.55	35.10	34.90	35.00
Admiral Telecom	38.00	0.00	0.00	3,800,000	300,000	+0.60	38.10	37.90	38.00
Admiral Tech	40.00	0.00	0.00	4,000,000	320,000	+0.65	40.10	39.90	40.00
Admiral Health	42.00	0.00	0.00	4,200,000	340,000	+0.70	42.10	41.90	42.00
Admiral Education	45.00	0.00	0.00	4,500,000	360,000	+0.75	45.10	44.90	45.00
Admiral Environment	48.00	0.00	0.00	4,800,000	380,000	+0.80	48.10	47.90	48.00
Admiral Space	50.00	0.00	0.00	5,000,000	400,000	+0.85	50.10	49.90	50.00
Admiral Defense	52.00	0.00	0.00	5,200,000	420,000	+0.90	52.10	51.90	52.00
Admiral Aerospace	55.00	0.00	0.00	5,500,000	440,000	+0.95	55.10	54.90	55.00
Admiral Nuclear	58.00	0.00	0.00	5,800,000	460,000	+1.00	58.10	57.90	58.00
Admiral Biotech	60.00	0.00	0.00	6,000,000	480,000	+1.05	60.10	59.90	60.00
Admiral Robotics	62.00	0.00	0.00	6,200,000	500,000	+1.10	62.10	61.90	62.00
Admiral Nanotech	65.00	0.00	0.00	6,500,000	520,000	+1.15	65.10	64.90	65.00
Admiral Quantum	68.00	0.00	0.00	6,800,000	540,000	+1.20	68.10	67.90	68.00
Admiral AI	70.00	0.00	0.00	7,000,000	560,000	+1.25	70.10	69.90	70.00
Admiral VR	72.00	0.00	0.00	7,200,000	580,000	+1.30	72.10	71.90	72.00
Admiral AR	75.00	0.00	0.00	7,500,000	600,000	+1.35	75.10	74.90	75.00
Admiral MR	78.00	0.00	0.00	7,800,000	620,000	+1.40	78.10	77.90	78.00
Admiral XR	80.00	0.00	0.00	8,000,000	640,000	+1.45	80.10	79.90	80.00
Admiral Mixed	82.00	0.00	0.00	8,200,000	660,000	+1.50	82.10	81.90	82.00
Admiral Global	85.00	0.00	0.00	8,500,000	680,000	+1.55	85.10	84.90	85.00
Admiral Asia	88.00	0.00	0.00	8,800,000	700,000	+1.60	88.10	87.90	88.00
Admiral Europe	90.00	0.00	0.00	9,000,000	720,000	+1.65	90.10	89.90	90.00
Admiral Africa	92.00	0.00	0.00	9,200,000	740,000	+1.70	92.10	91.90	92.00
Admiral Oceania	95.00	0.00	0.00	9,500,000	760,000	+1.75	95.10	94.90	95.00
Admiral Middle East	98.00	0.00	0.00	9,800,000	780,000	+1.80	98.10	97.90	98.00
Admiral Latin America	100.00	0.00	0.00	10,000,000	800,000	+1.85	100.10	99.90	100.00

Valleys find future in old and new



The Rhondda:
Ian MacGregor's death revived bitter memories in South Wales this week, but the region is nevertheless being reshaped with a mix of the traditional and the modern

THE menu advertised Collier's Crisps and Miner's Muffins. Welcome to the Rhondda Heritage Park. This was once Lewis Merthyr Colliery in the heart of the South Wales coalfield. Now it is "a lively and evocative multi-media experience for all the family", complete with a shop full of red dragons and dolls in Welsh national dress. "We've made a pit stop at Rhondda," say its car stickers.

Into the restaurant with its cottagey furniture came a grizzled figure in a donkey jacket and coal-encrusted pit helmet. How authentic! A redundant miner - one of 10 employed by the park - to add a touch of verisimilitude to the tour.

But there was nothing sanitised about the reaction of these tour guides to the death this week of Sir Ian MacGregor, the man who shut down the British mining industry. "Bastard," said one former miner with the tiny blue scars of a lifetime's subterranean experience displayed for ever on his face. "Best thing he ever did, dying," said Squeaky Williams, the nightshift lampman up at Tower Colliery, the only pit in South Wales to escape the MacGregor axe when its men used their redundancy to stage a workers' buy-out. "And when Thatcher dies we'll close the pit and all take a day's holiday."

The bitterness runs deep against those who discharged the Thatcherite brief which promoted the interests of international capital above both the national interest and any sense

of compassion for the communities built around the nation's collieries.

It was not helped by the fact that the inhabitants of South Wales this week felt a flicker in the future which that international capitalism promised. Only the day after MacGregor's death, the Korean electronics giant LG, formerly Lucky Goldstar, was forced to issue hurried denials after one of its senior executives in Seoul said that, thanks to the Far East financial crisis, it was to postpone the development of its 1.7bn plant on a massive site just down the road in Newport.

It was splendid *schadenfreude* to the miners at Tower which is now paying high wages, making decent profits and recently paid its 300 employees a £500 dividend. "What kind of future is on offer from these foreign firms with their low pay and women's jobs," asked one of the visitors to Squeaky's lamproom. "They take home about £125 a week," he said, showing his own payslip for £459.

Such mythology is powerful, admitted David Rennie, a senior economist with the Welsh Development Agency. But it paints a faulty picture. "Inward investors [such as the Koreans or the 50 Japanese firms in the area] on average pay higher wages than local firms," he said. And although the decline of coal and steel has cost the region 100,000 jobs, a similar number have been created in new industries such as consumer electronics - half the United Kingdom's output of television sets and



Showing the way: Former miner Ivor England in his new job as a tour guide for the Rhondda Heritage Park Photograph: Rob Straton

80 per cent of its microwave ovens are now made in Wales.

More typical is the story of Leighton Davies who, after 14 years in the coal industry, has switched to electronics. Happily wearing the LG uniform of fawn slacks and bomber jacket, the 42-year-old showed me round the company's 250-acre site where buildings are being thrown up at a rate which takes the breath away.

Mr Davies joined the National Coal Board as a storeman at 19 and was soon the youngest personnel manager ever appointed in the coalfield. But the bulk of his career was spent in counselling miners on the

board's redundancy programme. When he joined the industry it had more than 50,000 miners; it had only 6,000 when he was laid off too.

"I decided to look for something in the growth area - electronics," he said. In the past eight years, he has had the pleasure of seeing his workforce double where in mining he saw it decimated. "They are secure jobs, and a technician can earn £20,000."

Yet for those without skills the decline of coal has left a miserable legacy in the valleys. Many of the redundant miners whom Leighton counselled have done well, "but I know a lot in their thirties and

forties who haven't worked since". The option for them and their sons is jobs as security guards at as little as £2 an hour.

"Either that or the dole, as we still call it," said Glyndwr Roberts, a face-worker and chairman of the Tower Lodge National Union of Mineworkers, over a pint in the Pen-y-waun Club & Institute. The place must have looked welcoming in the old days when it was full, but now it looked bleak in its spartan, Formica and leatherette, empty but for a handful of older drinkers. "When they closed the mines they took all the hope out of the young people - anti-social be-

haviour, crime and drugs is the result. A gap has opened between those out of work and those in. Many people are afraid to go out at night."

Clean stone, unpolluted air and inactive chimneys are but small compensation for those like him who feel cheated of their industry. Everywhere lingers the sense that many of the mines were closed unnecessarily. "They shut better pits than this one," said Squeaky, up at Tower.

Mr Davies agrees. "It took me a long time to realise that their strategy was to close everything," he said. "At first I assumed that they were closing the loss-makers and that the in-

dustry would be left with a dozen or so lucrative pits. After all my pit had just embarked on a major capital investment costing £30m. MacGregor himself came to unveil the plaque. The colliery was making money right up until the day they closed it."

But a political rather than an industrial decision had been taken. The coal industry became entangled with ideology, smashing the unions, privatisation, freeing up international trade and capital flows were the priorities of the Thatcher government. "The colliery review procedure," said Leighton, "was nothing more than a sham."

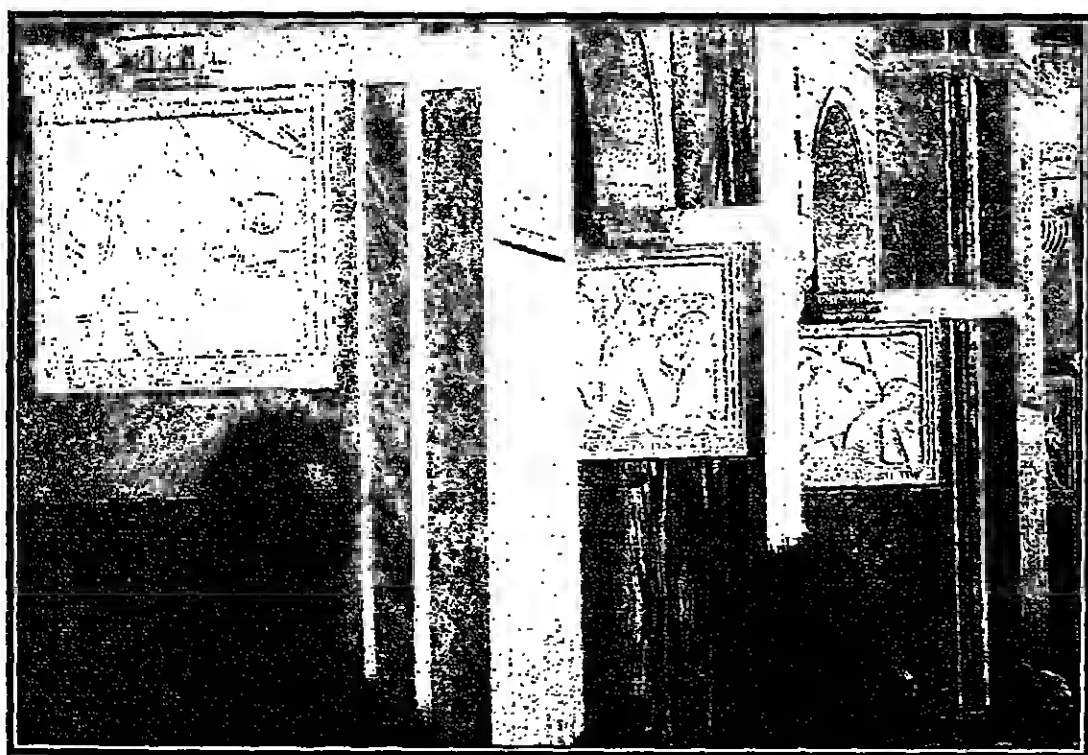
There is, in all this, something of a nostalgia for the good old days. One of the Heritage Park's guides, Ivor England - a miner like his grandfather, father, uncles, brothers and cousins - waxes during the historical part of his tour about the "empire on which the sun never set, so long as coal was extracted from the Rhondda". History as romantic heritage is on offer in the European Union-funded park along with the replica Davy lamps in shining brass.

But there is nothing nostalgic about the £20m plan by Tower to sink a new shaft at Margon to mine coking coal for the nearby Port Talbot steelworks. A government-sponsored report this week by the Cardiff Business School says that coal makes a significant contribution to the local economy and suggests a new government framework to support the industry. Ministers have responded with favourable noises.

On Sundays at Tower Colliery the miners hold underground open days. Many of the visitors are former miners. "They say the difference in technology is unbelievable," Squeaky told me. "Go through to the control room and you can see it all on the monitors." In the control room the men on duty spoke proudly of how in the past there would be a man underground by every conveyor belt. "Now it's all done by computer and the men underground are all engaged in more productive work," said the controller. "Look at this new cutter" - it cost £1.5m. "We didn't have that under British Coal."

"I looked at the monitors. At the bottom of each was the word Goldstar. The Koreans were here too. Welcome to a murky world of the future."

TOMORROW IN THE SEVEN-SECTION INDEPENDENT ON SUNDAY



SEX AND GOD

Eric Gill slept with his daughters and sisters.
Now victims of abuse want his breathtaking
carvings removed from Westminster Cathedral.
Cole Moreton on a moral dilemma

Plus

- The 10 coolest things about Britain
- Saturday Night Fever is back - this time on stage
- Part two of the ultimate guide to seafood

the university for industry

Monday 20 April 1998

Business Design Centre, London N1

A one day national conference for policy makers in higher and further education to look at the implementation of the Government's proposals on the creation of a University for Industry. It will examine the role that further and higher education institutions can play by working together and with business at a local, regional and national level increasing the skills and knowledge of the workforce, as well as supporting research and development in industry and commerce.

Speakers Include:

Dr Kim Howells MP,
Parliamentary Under Secretary, DFEE

Rosie Boycott,
Editor, *The Independent* and *The Independent on Sunday*

David Brown,
Chairman, Motorola Ltd and Chair,
UPI Design and Implementation Advisory Group

Josh Hillman,
Institute for Public Policy Research

Simon Sperryn,
Chief Executive, London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

Diana Warwick,
Chief Executive, Committee of Vice-Chancellors and Principals



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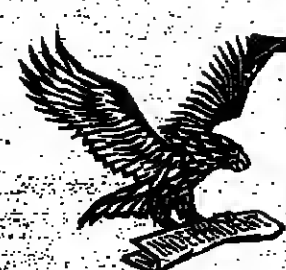
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TIME OFF

TRAVEL, LEISURE & SPORT

Saturday 18 April 1998



PICTURE OF THE WEEK Marathon man: dawn preparations for next week's race in London, by Jim Loring. To order a 12x9in print (price £15) call 0171-293 2534

Week in, week out

If you're a single pig or an elephant who likes the odd lolly, the last seven days have been great. But then there's always good news for animals, writes Andrew R Marshall

It was the best of times, the worst of times. For human beings, this week was the usual dreadful concatenation of tragic, bloody and violent awfulness, at least as far as the international news agencies were concerned.

The agencies, serious and professional though they are, sometimes seem to have a profoundly black view of the world. In common with most journalists, they focus on bad news.

They do try to find something a little lighter each day, but lighter doesn't always mean funny. Sometimes it means, frankly, pretty grim, because journalists have a macabre sense of humour. They love what are called in the trade "Scandinavian Brights," shocking and unpleasant stories with a twist.

A good example ran on Reuters last week. "A German camper died from injuries received when a camp-site toilet exploded as he tried to light a cigarette, blasting him through a closed window," it reported, with a straight face.

But turn to the wonderful world of animals, and all is different. When furry friends figure, the accent seems to be on good news. Every day there is a snippet of good tidings from the animal kingdom.

This week, we had anti-depressants for dogs to ease the pain of separation from their owners. But that wasn't all. A heat-wave has hit Israel, but the animals in the Biblical Zoo won't suffer. The bears and elephants get fruit-flavoured ice treats. "We don't want to see them hot and bored. If they start pacing back and forth, exhibiting bored behaviour, it means they're unhappy and might start acting strangely," said Dr Gabriel Eshkar, a veterinarian and deputy zoo director.

Malaysia is also swelling. The inhabitants of the zoo will be all right, however, because their drinking water comes from a special well. Meanwhile some 600,000 residents of Kuala Lumpur have suffered severe water rationing for weeks. Sarajevo Zoo has had a lean time. It

was forced to close in 1992 when the war put it on the front lines. At the moment, the only resident is a rather sad owl, which was donated by a taxi driver after it crashed into his cab. None of the other animals survived the war. The company that runs the zoo has written to all foreign

embassies in Bosnia asking for help to restock it.

Meanwhile, in Utah, a pig that wandered into heavy traffic and caused an almighty accident ended up in the lap of luxury. It was taken home by Pauline Coy, who found it injured and wandering along

Interstate 15. She gave it a bed in her chicken coop. "It took everything I had to hoist him up and get him in my truck," she said, having tucked it up in a heated blanket.

Another pig, Rudy, who has three eyes and two snouts, also had some good news. Instead of facing the (pork) chop or life in a freak show, he has been saved by Pigs Without Partners, a Los Angeles-based animal rescue group. They changed his name to Dinto, for reasons best known to themselves. "I think Dinto is going to have a wonderful life - much better than in the circus," Rocky More, the organisation's executive director, said.

A brighter future is also in store for birds in California. Electric fences around prisons have saved \$40m a year in guard salaries, but they aren't so great for birds which fly into them. Among their victims have been 145 burrowing owls, 111 loggerhead shrikes, and 10 red-tailed hawks - all endangered species. Now the authorities have put up nets at half the state's pris-

ons, at a cost of \$3.4m, which should cut the number of electrocuted birds by 90 per cent.

Good news, too, for Brazilian bulls. *Farra do boi*, or ox-baiting, a traditional Brazilian Easter sport, has been made a crime except in certain special areas, which is good news for the oxes. So seriously do the police take this law that they fired rubber bullets at a group of people who tried to have a go in the south of the country.

So why all the good news? And why so little good news about people?

Perhaps the proliferation of sweet stories about animals reflects a sad truth about the world: that most people are horrible to each other, most of the time. But it is more likely that it represents a sad truth about journalists, not about the world: these hard-bitten types, with their cynicism about fellow human beings, are reduced to sniffling bundles of sentimentality by little (or big) furry animals. It warms your heart, doesn't it?

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Screening gems on LA's main street

New York's Broadway is thrilling, but long. Its Los Angeles namesake is shorter and much more intense. Simon Calder walks the street.

"Need breakfast? Try our special," invites the canteen at the Criminal Courts Building (open 7am to 3.30pm, if you're interested). A bearded, ageing panhandler, with an expression so distant that it could have been still gazing at Saigon, circa 1970, misreads my interest in the building: "If you're going to court, you can get in this way," he pointed.

He was the first of many beggars on Broadway to make a dollar that day, but this represents a very reasonable price for a street that, however unwittingly, puts on a rollicking show for visitors.

You could cover the ground in 40 minutes. The significant stretch of constricted artery that is California's version of Broadway is barely a couple of miles long – yet it cuts clean through a startling cross-section of Los Angeles.

That's Los Angeles proper, not to be confused with any of its self-indulgent suburbs. The whole LA megalopolis looks like an over-ripe Californian peach that has been splatted on a freeway. Downtown is the knarled old stone at the core – and Broadway is an especially deep vein.

You pick up the trail in the vicinity of the original Pueblo de Los Angeles, the Spanish settlement that has been spruced up as El Pueblo Historico Park for the benefit of the few tourists who get this far from a beach. Across the park, the handsome desolation of Union Station reminds you this is a fickle city whose romance for the train ended years ago when it shacked up with the motor car. Appropriately, you bridge Highway 101 at the start of the walk south.

Every corner of California's biggest city looks familiar, that's probably because it's been used as a backdrop for some movie or other. One non-fictional exception stands a block away on Spring Street, a bulky cuboid of a building: the Federal Courthouse, where OJ Simpson was tried.

A more uplifting sight is the adjacent about-to-ascend sight of spaceport City Hall, a classic 1928 skyscraper straight out of Gotham, topped with a pyramid. Having cocked a suitably flamboyant snook at New York, for three decades no other building in LA was allowed to exceed 13 stories.

So far, so opulent. Someone has even thought to add a piece of street sculpture to divert the pedestrian. But as you descend, the middle distance looks a little less rosy. The first real sight on Broadway proper, like the last, is home to a newspaper. As a piece of architecture, the Los Angeles Times building is as undistinguished as, say, Canary Wharf. But the car park is enlivened with a relief showing the history of LA since 1492 (leaving out the troublesome riots 500 years later). A series of quotations adds journalistic gravitas to the proceedings. "Los Angeles is destined to become the most important city in this country, if not the world," said Henry E Huntington in 1920.

New York, Tokyo and London might have something to say about that. If each of these cities had to compete on the basis of a single building, rather than in millions of people, they would be hard-pressed to beat the Bradbury Building, shortly to appear on your left. Despite being rooted firmly in the 19th century, the Bradbury has the distinction of making it into the 21st century as a location for the film *Blade Runner*.

Victorian brickwork facing out on Broadway conceals a conspiratorially indulgent structure, with terracotta and wrought-iron combining to frame a collusion of spaces. The conspiracy, if the account of the architect George Wyman is to

be believed, was between him and his dead brother, who inspired the design from beyond the grave with the help of a Ouija board.

And so to McDonald's – not a place you would automatically equate with an inspirational elevenses. But on the east side between Third and Fourth stands a Mayan branch of the burger chain, with extra Mis-

If every corner of LA looks familiar, that's because it's been used as a backdrop for a movie

sico dressing. Alongside the Mesoamerican imagery is a framed notice promising *Mi Casa es Su Casa* – my house is your house – reflecting that you are moving into thoroughly Hispanic territory. More Mexican meals can be scavenged at the stalls within the adjacent Grand Central public market, the closest you'll get to Latin life this side of the Rio Grande.

A few more blocks of Spanish-speaking stores and panhandlers intervene before the 1930s motifs on the sidewalk outside Clifton's cafeteria (also notable for its extensive list of breakfast options). A

series of elaborate mosaics shows scenes from the activities of Los Angeles, culminating in a film cameraman.

"Broadway" means theatre in both New York and Los Angeles. But while both have a dozen or so straggling along their respective versions of the road, the LA collection is devoted to screen, not stage. These are also much more ornate, with painstaking decoration everywhere. The mightiest of them all is the Los Angeles Theatre, on the western shore between Sixth and Seventh. Its implausibly elaborate columns look as though they were designed by a neo-classicist on tequila. It opened in 1931, with the premiere of Chaplin's *City Lights*.

An even more extravagant theatre, the Mayan, stands a block west of Broadway at 11th and Hill Street. Pre-Columbian imagery has been taken to absurdity and beyond, with fierce terracotta warriors out-facing passers-by. The whole concoction looks more manic yet when caught in a flash of sun reflecting from one of the nearby foil-wrapped skyscrapers.

Your mission ends at a real Mission mish-mash. The architect of Hearst Castle, Julia Morgan, translated Hispanic designs to 1111 Broadway and amplified it with Art Deco to create the Herald Examiner building. As a treat for the eyes, this

In the frame: LA's Broadway

Photograph: Gerard Lewis

long, low, palace-of-print looks superb: as a place to run a newspaper it looks seriously challenged, which is perhaps why the *Herald Examiner* has not done as well as the *LA Times*. South from here, the inner city really takes a grip. Quentin Crisp described Los Angeles as "New York lying down", but here it resembles Mogadishu taking a nap. Best cross the road and head back north. There's a lot more Broadway, backdrops and beggars, on the other side.

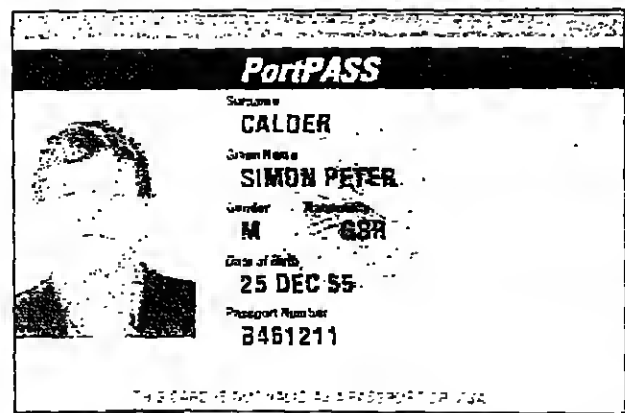
Simon Calder travelled to Los Angeles from Heathrow, and returned from LA to Luton, using a selection of somewhat dodgy tickets that, entailed making stops in Chicago, Kansas City, Phoenix and Amsterdam. The total cost was around £430.

You can reach the city more easily and cheaply non-stop from Heathrow on Air New Zealand, American Airlines, British Airways, United Airlines and Virgin Atlantic (which also operates on behalf of Continental Airlines). Booking through a discount travel agency, you could pay as little as £350 return.

"LA Access", by Richard Saul Wurman (distributed in the UK by HarperCollins, £12.99) is an excellent guide to Broadway and the rest of the city.

Within 30 minutes of arriving at Newark airport, I was being fingerprinted by the US Immigration and Naturalization Service – not because I'm a particularly undesirable alien, but because I was renewing my Impass. Anyone who has queued for hours in the queue for Immigration at New York should try to get hold of one of these wondrous devices, which gets you into America with just a wave of the hand.

I have written previously about this precious piece of plastic, but the steady stream of enquiries about it since then makes it worth restating the advice. Impass is the acronym for Immigration and Naturalization Service Passenger Accelerated Service System. Using a special card, you can speed through US Immigration in less time than it takes to recite the name of the system.



The card is intended for "low-risk, frequent" travellers to the US. You can apply for it – and use it – only in five international airports: New York JFK and Newark, Los Angeles, Miami and Toronto. If you feel you qualify, follow the signs to the enrolment centre in the airport terminal. Here, an immi-

gration official performs a perfunctory interview about how often you visit the US; he or she can probably tell whether you are being extravagant with the truth just by looking at your passport. If there are no previous US Immigration stamps, you'd better have a good story ready.

You then complete an application rather like the Visa Waiver form (which asks about previous involvement in drugs and Nazi war crimes) in hours your fingerprints taken and place your right hand in a special machine that measures its geometry – a highly individual characteristic. Then you have a supremely unflattering picture taken (you've just spent eight hours on a plane with inferior in-flight entertainment, for goodness' sake).

The card is free, and looking silly is a small price to pay for avoiding immigration queues in the coming year.

"We took your advice and booked the £199 trip to South Korea", write Peter Davies and Alison Parker on a jolly postcard from Seoul. They are referring to the silliest offer the year so far: I wrote on 7 March that

British Airways was unloading seats to the Korean capital for £199, because of the Asian economic slump. BA has now abandoned the route altogether, but not before the pair had taken advantage of the Far East-for-less-than-tuppence-a-mile deal.

"With the exchange rate so strong we have found everything to be roughly half the price of the UK, although the tradespeople here seem to think we're loaded; haggling has become a very quickly learned skill. Saying 'We are not Japanese' and having a 12-inch height advantage increases our bargaining position substantially.

"Nevertheless, it's a fascinating place and somewhere we would not have visited without the giveaway fare. We eagerly await the next obscure bargain." So do I.

Neither obscure, nor a bargain. That's Peter May's e-mailed response to an item in last week's Check In column.

"I don't think Boots £135 for family insurance for one month is a good deal. Other companies are offering 12 month multiple-trip family insurance for the same price or less. The Independent usually points out the good deals; this doesn't seem like one."

Favourable or otherwise, Mr May's comments – like those of every reader – are appreciated.

GREEN CHANNEL

America may have invented the national park, but here in Britain we caught on eventually. If you were one of the tens of thousands of people who visited one of the national parks in England and Wales during the Easter break, the chances are you got there by car. Fewer than one in five of the 76m people who visit national parks every year, get there by any other means of transport.

The consequence? Severe traffic congestion and pollution in some of the most environmentally sensitive and tranquil areas of Britain, and a growing need for our green and pleasant land to be Tarmacdamed-over in order to create car parks to deal with the influx. Not surprisingly, the Council for National Parks is eager to encourage people to travel by public transport.

The Peak District National Park, which receives 2.2m day visits per year – more than any national park in the world except Mount Fuji in Japan – is particularly at pains to improve things. Its integrated transport strategy, launched by Glenda Jackson this month, proposes long-term plans such as the reintroduction of the Buxton-Matlock railway and traffic restraints on cross-Pennine

routes. In the short term, the Park Authority is trying hard to entice us on to public transport for future visits. Exchange your parking receipt at an information centre, and you get a travel pack with £5 worth of discount tickets for public transport plus travel and walking information.

The authority has also got together with the British Mountaineering Council to introduce a special bus that will allow climbers to leave their cars at home. Climbers (and other members of the public) can get on the bus after work on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday evenings in Sheffield and climb or walk at the popular areas of Burbage Bridge and Stanage Edge until the sun goes down, when the bus returns. The bus will also run during the day on Sunday.

For information on public transport facilities to national parks throughout the country, contact the Council for National Parks on 0171-924 4077. For details on travelling to and in the Peak District: Peak District National Park 01629 816200.

Sue Whear

RED CHANNEL

A compendium of hazards facing today's traveller. This week: hidden taxes

Since the start of the year, advertisements for flights have been obliged to include pre-payable taxes. On 1 January, the Advertising Standards Authority brought in a new rule to this effect, but its enforcement has been patchy. A series of calls to advertisers in a range of publications – notably free magazines in the London area – reveals that many small travel agencies are failing to comply.

The response of three agencies when

pressed about why they don't include taxes in advertising suggests that they are aware of the new rule:

"Some people include us and some people don't. It's not the law."

"This is a mistake – next week it will be amended."

"As far as I'm concerned these taxes are inclusive of taxes. It's up to individual consultants to charge whatever they like." (This was the manager of an agency advertising "New York £129 return" – a figure which did not include £53 in tax.)

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Rock and rail

Orient Express it isn't cheap it ain't. But hell, you sure do see America from the railroad.

By Tamsin Murray-Leach

If you were offered a choice between crossing the United States by plane (a journey that takes six hours) or spending three days cooped up in a railway carriage, which would you choose? The same traveller, the expedient traveller, the money-conscious traveller would opt for the flight, but the shortsighted romantic would pack camera and notepad and head for the railway station lickity-split, barely pausing to wonder why they were paying over twice as much for their one-way train ticket as they would to fly.

So it was that I found myself on a train headed west out of New York, in the company of assorted armchair adventurers and Fearful Flyers, unprepared for three days of air conditioning. "Climate Control: simply turn the knob to the temperature you desire, and technology will do the rest." Personally I'd rather windows that open than technology, but three days later and with sinuses barely intact, Amtrak still seemed a far more civilised option than flying.

Unlike the sterilised environment of an aeroplane, travelling by train offers so many unique moments, each making the long journey worthwhile: waking up as the train rattled across the wide plains of Kansas at sunrise, faint light of dawn licking the panoramic window; reading quietly at night to the lulling hum of metal wheels, while our speed swept clouds of snow across the black shadows of winter trees; crossing the Colorado Rockies over towering mountain passes and through the red gorges of the Colorado River - soaring bald eagles and straggling elk the only signs of life.

Much of North America was built on the railroad, yet so few US citizens take the train these days that the Clinton administration is considering eliminating Amtrak's already reduced operating subsidies. Once Western railroad companies posted advertisements back East offering packages of prairie land to prospective passengers: to-day there are no freebies, just a rather hefty demand on your cheque book.

New York to San Francisco or LA is three days straight on a train, with a short stopover in Chicago's business district - you'll have time to glimpse a few skyscrapers and that's it. If economy is your priority, catch a plane or brave the bus. Those taking the train should invest in a sleeper. The first morning on board, after waking from a sound sleep to snowflakes falling on the quiet, bleak farmlands of Ohio, I breakfasted in the dining car beside a large man with a heavy Brooklyn accent. He was a tough guy who looked as if he had survived far more in life than a night in an uncomfortable chair.

"I've always wanted to take the friggin' train to LA," he groaned, his heavy eyes struggling to stay open. "But unless I get a sleeper for tonight, I really don't think I'm gonna make it - yo, I'm serious."

Sleepers do not come cheap, and upon peeping into your allotted cupboard for the first time you may wonder where the dollars have gone. Family groups, taller couples or those with a low space-invasion threshold would be wise to take a family or deluxe cabin, which include a mini-bathroom, couch and just about enough room to swing a cat.

Yet it's the things that wouldn't seem like indulgences at home which one comes to appreciate after a few hours on a train. In the sleeping cars the toilets are always clean and there's never a queue; one can take a shower, weak by American standards but on a par with British plumbing; and, perhaps most importantly, you can shut the door on all other passengers, thus avoiding crying babies, hissing Walkmans and

other people's conversations. Dave, my sleeping car attendant, took immaculate care of his charges, regardless of whether we boarded in the middle of the night, came complete with oversized, overweight baggage, had a hundred questions about the route or merely wished to be left in peace. Orange juice and a newspaper were supplied on waking, coffee was available all day and chocolates miraculously appeared in the sleeper after dinner.

Amtrak has concentrated in recent years on improving its service standards, and the cheerful friendliness of all its on-

more evident than in the dining car. An illusion of first-class dining is created by allowing sleeper passengers to reserve a time slot for dinner, while the commoners down in coach must queue up for a space, but the food - served on plastic plates due to financial cutbacks - is just as mediocre for everyone. Entrées such as steak and catfish look promisingly elegant on the menu, but fail to live up to expectations, raising slightly below standard airplane fare. Amtrak claims that its chefs were trained at the Culinary Institute of America, but in what, exactly?

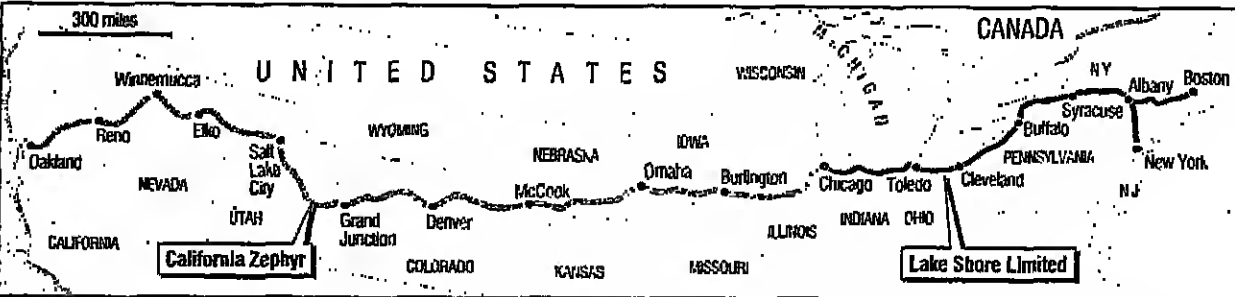
As Amtrak operates the traditional railcar policy of filling all four seats at a table, thus a couple or lone traveller will always be seated with strangers, an occasionally alarming but never uninteresting experience. My many dining companions included a pair of actors and their child, moving to Los Angeles for a three-month work contract; an itinerant worker from the Midwest, recently divorced and heading West for the promise of a ware house job and a space on his buddy's couch; and three high school graduates with bad punk haircuts from Smalltown Pennsylvania, determined on en-

The US on track: New York to San Francisco or LA is three days straight in a train
Photographer: Corbis

Indeed, Americans might all at first look alike in the disguise of comfortable clothes, but a wide sample of the United States can be found on the train. A political lobbyist from Washington confided that he took the train annually not only to get in three days of undisturbed work, but to "meet America", declaring that Washington and New York provided little insight into the true constituent body. Dinner does not afford the only occasion for discussion, as three days of confinement tends to prompt most travellers into enthusiastic conversation at the slightest provocation. Stories are swapped on the platform at each stop, and it's easy to strike up discourse in the lounge car, with its huge floor-to-ceiling windows, magazine racks, swivelling easy chairs and bar.

Dave the sleeping car attendant sighed, however, that it wasn't quite like the old days, when the lounge was the scene of rowdy drinking parties, thick smoke and occasional nudity. Nowadays things are a little more subdued, with a Happy Hour and "get together" before dinner, followed by a nightly movie screening. Community spirit is encouraged by the Chief of On-Board Services and the attendants: at one point we were invited over the intercom to stick our heads out of our cabins and greet our neighbours.

Yet despite the intriguing company, it must be admitted that the opportunity for carefree solitude was the trip's real selling point. Despite the lack of air (take nasal spray), my little standard sleeper was not the cramped closet it first appeared to be - as it turned out, it was little short of a surrogate womb. With food, accommodation and the whole point of the day - travel - taken care of by others, I was free to retreat to my cabin, close the door and sit quietly as America rushed on by.



Getting there
Bookings to parts of the US, notably Florida, are extremely heavy, but to other destinations on the East Coast you should be able to find seats at £250 return, or £350 to the West Coast.

Getting across
If you can travel by 21 May, Thomas Cook Flights Direct (0990 101520) has a special deal giving reduced-rate Amtrak tickets

for two or three passengers travelling together. Companies such as Explorers Tours (01753 681999) offer a range of organised rail tours of the US.

The Greyhound Bus Company is still rolling across America. Four days of unlimited travel (enough to take you from coast to coast) costs £75, while a 30-day pass is £230. These must be bought in advance from Greyhound International (01342 317317).

board staff reflects the success of this policy. Having worked the trains for almost 20 years, Dave's knowledge of the railroads and of local history was inexhaustible, as he happily pointed out nuclear waste dumps on the Plains, wildlife in the Rockies and whorehouses in Nevada.

Just bear in mind that despite the frills, Amtrak is still a working train service rather than an Orient Express-style recreation of bygone extravagance. Nowhere is this

However, there's still something exciting about sitting down to dine in a moving railway carriage, a feeling that far surpasses buying wilted burgers-to-go from the hatch on British trains. After dark it feels cosy and intimate, while there's nothing quite like an early breakfast of hearty American pancakes and maple syrup as the sun streams through the wall-to-wall windows.

Mealtimes also provide the best opportunity to mingle with other passengers.

lightening adventure. Dinner conversation is always illuminating for the casual observer of American culture: I remained quiet as a rather conservative graduate law student and a middle-aged travelling mall-to-mall "Glamour Shots" photographer had an earnest conversation about the ills of San Francisco, basing their dislike of the city on the hypothetical problem of having to explain to a small child why two grown men would walk down the street holding hands.

The promised land, for a fistful of dollars

Tony Marshall visits New Canaan, New England, where new and old money retreats to a clappedboard paradise

It was Ernest Hemingway who said the rich were the same as you or me, they just had more money. And in New Canaan, Connecticut, said to be the richest town in America, it is easy to believe he was right. This is a squeaky-clean sort of a place, full of white-painted clapboard buildings straight out of a Dulux ad, or its American equivalent. There is a church on almost every street - the First Presbyterian, the Congregational, Episcopalian, the United Methodists. And then there is Silver Hill, the poshest centre for the treatment of drunks and addicts in America, where stars of stage

and screen come to dry out and get straight - a process that *Porky's Complaints* author Philip Roth underwent and described in his last-but-one novel *Sabbath's Theater*.

Hemingway is unlikely to have taken the cure, but he knew New Canaan through his lifelong editor and agent, Maxwell Perkins, who had a house up the road.

New Canaan certainly has a rich and respectable front. Canaan was the Old Testament name for the Israelites' Promised Land and it has, for many of its residents, achieved that heavenly status. The town centre is spotless, as if someone

had gone round twice a day with a giant vacuum cleaner. It is tiny - only a block square - set on the edge of Oenoke Ridge, which was once the hunting ground of the Iroquois tribe of native Americans.

Roads lead off from the corners of the block to Norwalk, Wilton and Stamford, and enclose what is now the haunt of Wall Street brokers, lawyers, bankers and film stars such as Meryl Streep, Christopher Reeve and Robert Redford. And Andre Previn has a place, Caramor - a vast estate with a Mexican-style hacienda which houses a concert hall.

There is the tiny New Canaan bank building, a furniture store, two petrol stations, a small cinema, the Starbucks coffee house, fire station, cake shop, sports outfitters, two clothing stores, the CVS drugstore, the Bread Basket, Uncle's Deli, flower shop, real estate broker's, a Chinese take-away, the Tequila Mockingbird Mexican bar and restaurant, a bike shop, and a bar called Cherry Street East - on Cherry Street.

It is nothing to write home about, perhaps, yet it is home to more millionaires than anywhere else in New England - which means anywhere in the world. It is less than 20 miles from Manhattan, and about an hour from Grand Central Sta-

tion. It is the heart of America's equivalent of the Surrey stockbroker belt, the difference being that it is densely forested with oaks, plane trees and pines, so that the vast houses are mostly hidden from the roads - and there is (perhaps surprisingly, for car-crazed America) a 25mph speed limit. It is also incredibly pretty. And if there were a competition for the quietest town in North America, New Canaan would be in the running. You can see why it is such a haven for the big players from Hollywood or Madison Avenue or Wall Street. And there is plenty of old money, with residents such as members of the Kennedy clan hiding out in their red-brick mansions. Which is why you won't find houses advertised for less than £1m.

Yet many of the people here don't consider themselves rich - because the Joneses next door have a £10m residence.

The style of many of these dwellings is unpretentious - one- or two-storey wooden buildings like the old New England farmhouses they may once have been (one or two still have red barns attached). Some of the newer ones are mock Louisiana plantation houses, copies of Dutch-style houses in Cape Cod, or even what look like French chateaux.

You can have one built to your specifications from an architect's catalogue - an off-the-peg *antebellum* mansion with modern plumbing - for the same price as an old clapboard farmhouse. But don't expect change from £2m.

The early-morning trains are crammed with commuters, who start work at 7.30am, in well-cut suits and clean shirts reading the *New York Times*. The last direct train back is at 7.03pm and it is a different story. Plastic numbers of ice line the carriage doorways and empty cans of Coors beer roll around on the floor. One dishevelled suit, probably back from a posting to a bank in London, was yelling over and over again with a good, phoney English accent, "You're obviously one of us." Everyone fell about laughing at the irony.

New Canaan is the end of the line, the terminus where everyone who is very rich, very lucky or very screwed up must wake and queue at the Taxi Stand of Life. The pocket timetable gives details of return trains from New York and Stamford to Glenbrook, Springfield, Talmadge Hill and New Canaan. There is an ad at the top of the page: "Alcohol and Drug Helpline," it says. "Information & Treatment Referral Free. Confidential." Well, *alleluia!*

A train
The Eastern and Oriental Express (0171-805 5100) has launched a Summer Promotion on the train between Bangkok and Singapore. For departures between this week and 17 September, passengers on the luxury train get a night's accommodation at both the Oriental in Bangkok and the Mandarin Oriental in Singapore. The fare is £800 per person; unfortunately, this excludes the cost of flights to Asia.

A boat
A new high-speed vessel starts sailing between Liverpool and the Isle of Man on 22 May. The SeaCat, operated by the IOM Steam Packet Company (0990 523523) will take two and a half hours to reach the port of Douglas. A return ticket to the island will cost £32.

A plane
This week American Airlines begins flights from New York direct to Cuzco in Peru, close to the ancient Inca city of Machu Picchu. For the first time, travellers from Britain can reach Cuzco with a single change of plane - leave Heathrow at 4pm and, even with a refuelling stop in Lima, you'll be high in the Peruvian Andes in good time for breakfast the following day. Journey Latin America (0181-747-3108) quotes a fare of £832 return, including taxes.

A room
Hotel rates in Britain have risen faster than anywhere else in Europe in the past two years, according to the European Business Travel Index published yesterday by American Express. Increases average 9 per cent - while in Berlin, prices have fallen by 7 per cent.

A meal
The Independent reported this week on the spread of "Red Tide" in Hong Kong, involving algae carrying a toxin that gives water a crimson tinge. In response, the travel health specialist MASTA is advising visitors to the former colony to avoid eating fish and seafood. "The symptoms can occur within minutes of finishing a meal," says travel health adviser Sue Taylor. "The toxin causes sickness, diarrhoea and, in extreme cases, paralysis and death."

For further advice, call MASTA on 0891 224100.

A drink
"There is a great deal of drinking in Romania, as you will soon notice, and most crime is alcohol-related. Non-

drinkers will meet with the same incomprehension as vegetarians. Bars are generally men-only places and range from dark rough-and-ready dives to places with a rather chintzy ice cream-parlour atmosphere." - from *Romania: the Rough Guide* (£10.99), just updated by Tim Burford and Dan Richardson.

A week from now ...
... you can learn about Italy in the Age of Turner in a study day at Allcyn's School, Twynley Road, London SE22. The event ties in with the exhibition of the same name at the nearby Dulwich Picture Gallery. It includes a lecture on the origins of the Grand Tour by Professor Eilward Chaney. For tickets to Saturday's event, price £25, call 0181-693 6911.

A month from now ...
... you should be heading north for the Highland Festival 98 - a celebration of arts and culture throughout the Highlands and Islands, which lasts from 22 May to 6 June and stretches from Thurso to Portree and Ullapool to Inverness. Call 01479 810363 for details of events.

A year from now ...
... a fortnight in Puerto Vallarta will cost £1,169 at the Paradiso all-inclusive resort in Mexico, travelling from Gatwick or Manchester with Thomson (0990 502046).

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The rain of St James

... certainly falls on the sacred city of Santiago de Compostela. Yet this adds to the unexpectedly electric atmosphere, writes Elizabeth Nash

"You have to see Santiago with its stones drenched," they tell you, which is just as well because it is rare in this windswept north-western corner of Spain for showers to hold off for long. But don't be put off. Despite grey skies and darkened granite walls sprouting green moss, this is one of the jauntiest cities in the country – quite an achievement for Europe's top Christian pilgrimage site.

Forget dour priests, pious penitents and tacky religious souvenirs. Santiago, supposedly the resting place of Saint James the Apostle, crackles with an air of lively celebration. Partly this is to do with the exuberant architecture, a sublime ensemble of Gothic, Romanesque and Baroque, dominated by the cathedral, which Ian Morris calls "unquestionably one of the great buildings of the world". Partly too, as a university city, 30,000 students create an irreverent buzz and an electric nightlife.

The city fathers have restored and pedestrianised the entire medieval centre and, despite centuries of mass tourism, have held in check the proliferation of devotional kitsch. In the 11th and 12th centuries the city received hundreds of thousands of pilgrims a year, and to help them a French monk wrote the world's first tourist guide in 1140. Chaucer's Wife of Bath had "been in Galicia at Seynt Jame", and many today similarly take the Road to Santiago as much for fun as for faith.

You'll see pilgrims with their trademark staff and cockleshell at any time, but especially on 25 July, St James's Day. Every seventh year, when the day falls on a Sunday, is declared a *Jacobo*. The next one is 1999, when millions will flock to embrace the silver, jewel-studded statue of the apostle high up behind the altar. It is an engaging sight, from a seat in the transept far below, to see a succession of tiny white hands emerge either side of the dazzling figure to clasp it round the neck.

For special services the giant incense burner, the *botafumeiro*, as tall and round as a priest, is hung from a complex pulley system and swung by eight men with ropes. Designed originally to obliterate the stench of a mass of travel-worn pilgrims, it swings in huge arcs followed by the eyes of the faithful who fear it will fall on their head. "The risk heightens emotions," remarks a local guidebook, with an astute nod to ecclesiastical psychology. Outside, on the magnificent Obradoiro square, which is constantly alive and at the same time soothingly tranquil, is the Hostal de los Reyes Catolicos, built in 1499 as a hospice for sick or weary pilgrims and said to be the oldest hotel in Europe. Take a drink in the bar, or a tapa or two in the cellar taverna if five-star luxury is beyond reach – though stay there if you possibly can – and peek at the gorge-

ous inner courtyards with their delicately carved granite fountains.

The plops and gurgles of dispersing rain-water form a constant accompaniment even when the sun is shining, reminding you never to move without your umbrella. The white-clad motionless performance artist in the square carries a white umbrella to protect his sodden robes. Souvenir shops in the medieval lanes contain mercifully few light-up virgins and waxen body parts, but countless miniature *botafumeiros* and a good selection of silverwork set with jet, including umbrella-shaped earrings.

Between each shop there is a bar or restaurant, with some of the most startling window displays of sea creatures I have ever seen. Crabs and lobsters two feet wide strain in their tanks against fat rubber bands that bind their terrible claws. Fish with jaws agape, teeth bared, languish on a white dish, and an octopus turned upside down, its tentacles tucked beneath its head, exposes its rows of beady suckers in all directions.

Overcome your fears, these establishments are relaxed and user-friendly. Drink the fragrant white Albarino or Ribeiro wines, among the finest in Spain. Locals drink rough wine from a plump white jug in little porcelain dishes called *cuncos*, but you should stick to the good stuff poured from bottle to glass, and buy the jug and dishes as souvenirs. Other delights include



Saints and street cred: despite grey skies and darkened granite, Santiago de Compostela is one of the jauntiest cities on the country – quite an achievement for Europe's top pilgrimage site

Photograph: A Woolfitt

Santiago tarts, made with almond flour, and creamy breast-shaped cheeses known as *teillas* (titlles).

A lone bagpiper, whose mournful tones wrap themselves round the granite arcades, adds to the atmosphere. Or a *tuna*, a stu-

dent musician, clad in black velvet, plays for tourists to fund his studies. Down his back pastel satin ribbons trail, adorned with rosettes as fat and pink as the camellias that nod from trees in ancient courtyards or lie splattered on the damp earth.

The only airline flying direct to Santiago de Compostela from Britain is Iberia (0171-830 0011), which flies from Heathrow. The lowest fare is £183 return. Spanish Tourist Office: 22 Manchester Square, London W1M 5AP (0171-486 8077).

Rugged and roasted

If you thought a good Sunday roast was the prerogative of the British, then a visit to the small Spanish town of Sepulveda is an eye-opening and mouth-watering experience. An hour and a half's drive north of Madrid, in the rugged and beautiful Castilian countryside, Sepulveda is a favourite destination for hungry *madrilenos* and a shrine to the culinary art of *el cordero asado* – roast lamb.

At midday on Sunday, there's still a sleepy air to the place, with most of the noise in the narrow cobbled streets coming from low-flying swallows and martins. But the doors and shutters of the medieval buildings are beginning to open to reveal restaurants after restaurants.

All feature *el horno de leña* – the wood-fired oven in which Castilian roasts are traditionally cooked.

In a well-rehearsed ritual, my *madrileno* friends Jaime and Isabel book a table at El Ismael, and we get a tantalising preview of lunch as the chef fills the oven with individual earthenware casseroles containing the legs of lamb, daubed with olive oil



and herbs and surrounded by potatoes, before we set out to work up a serious appetite.

Sepulveda is the gateway to the Hoos del Duraton natural park, where the river Duraton carves out a deep winding gorge, home to a colony of griffin vultures. They wheel and plane below us, no doubt working up their own appetites, as we follow a well-trodden path

to the tiny church and ruined monastery of San Frutos. In spring, the countryside is very green, the wild flowers blooming everywhere and there are flocks of goats and sheep, which remind us of lunch.

In our absence, Sepulveda has filled up with smart cars bearing Madrid licence plates, and the Ismael has become as convivially boisterous as only a

Spanish restaurant can be. There is a menu with a choice of items, but everyone seems to be eating the suckling lamb.

Our arrival, crisp on the outside, tender and pink within, and plenty of it. Perfect, pronounces Jaime. We have to agree. A robust Rioja red, a wheel of crusty bread and the freshest of salads adds to the wealth of textures, colours and tastes, and there is just enough room for a cooling velvety flan, and warming velvety brandy.

Before the journey back we wander, rather slowly, round Sepulveda. It boasts one of Spain's oldest town charters, and with its steep alleyways, Romanesque churches, the remnants of the old walls and views over the Duraton, would look great at any time. In the afterglow of lunch it is wonderful.

If you are not blessed with *Madrileno* friends or a smart car bearing Madrid licence plates, you can reach Sepulveda by bus from Segovia, itself relatively easy to reach by train from Madrid.

Mick Webb

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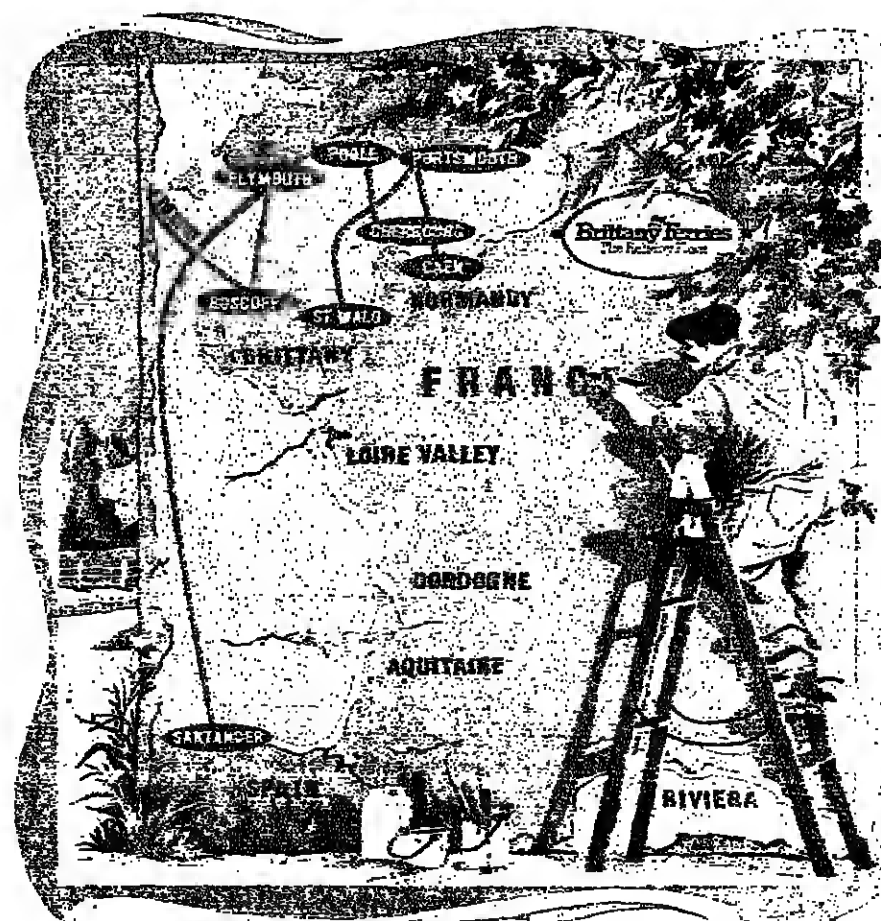


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Hampstead - Keats loved it, Constable painted it... and Sarah Jewell spent a day exploring its other riches

Hampstead, hill-top home to the rich and famous, first became fashionable in the 18th century when the discovery of spring water transformed the rural village into a sophisticated Georgian spa. The remedial waters, the fresh country air and the wide open heathland drew many creative spirits and the streets are studded with the names of writers, poets and painters who lived in the elegant Regency terraces that were built around the spa. Visitors to Hampstead today can still enjoy the invigorating breezes and catch glimpses of Constable's views over the heath - but mineral water is now sold in Arak tea-houses, French cafes and American diners.

The visitors
Sarah Jewell took Jessie Taube, 11, and Alice Brook-Smith, 11, to Hampstead for the day

Sarah: Hampstead on a Sunday morning is peaceful and quiet as most of the shops do not open until midday. Parking restrictions are lifted so it is also easy to find a space before the throng of afternoon shoppers arrives to battle its way into Hobbs, Jigsaw, Waterstone's, French Connection and all the other swanky high street shops and restaurants.

Remarkable for having survived since the Fifties, the Austrian-style Coffee Cup on the High Street is warm and cosy and the ideal spot for breakfast. Fortified with egg on toast and hot chocolate we walked up Gayton Road to Burgh House, the pretty Queen Anne building that is used for concerts and houses the Hampstead Museum of local history. We sat in sunshine in the beautifully tended garden and listened to Schubert's Trout being rehearsed inside before we looked around the exhibits of Hampstead's history from Anglo Saxon homestead to Nineties shopping mall.

Hungry again, we meandered past the Regency houses in Downshire Hill and stared at 2 Willow Road, Erno Goldfinger's Modernist adaptation of an 18th-century terrace (that may have looked chic in the 1930s but which looks rather drab today), past the cottages where Keats lived and on to the Freemason's Arms, a high friendly pub with a beer garden that welcomes children and serves a rather pricey Sunday lunch.

Real ale drinkers or those in search of a more intimate atmosphere should keep on walking to the Flask in Flask Walk, the original tavern where the spa water was bottled in the 18th century. For a tasty snack there's always La Creperie de Hampstead, the tiny pancake stall outside the King William IV pub on the High Street where freshly griddled savoury or sweet pancakes are flipped by two flushed Frenchwomen in white chef's smocks.

After lunch we walked to the top of the hill to visit Hampstead's oldest mansion, Fenton House. Built in 1693, it was left to

the National Trust in 1952 and has a delightful collection of china, furniture, needlework and early keyboard instruments. The beautiful polished walnut, maplewood and mahogany harpsichords and virginals are all still played and musicians often come to practise on Sundays.

By mid-afternoon the streets of Hampstead are seething with shoppers and tourists and it is time to head for the fresh air of the Heath. Either drive or take the 210 bus from Whitestone Pond (or those with boundless energy and no children can walk) to Kenwood House. This magnificent 18th-century neoclassical villa overlooks sloping lawns and an ornamental lake, has a fine collection of paintings and is the jewel in Hampstead's crown.

Jessie: I liked looking in the shops on the high street and I wanted to go into Gap hut

it wasn't open when we arrived. I liked the Constable room in Burgh House and seeing the paintings of Hampstead before the houses were built.

Fenton House was really good and the lady who lives in the house gave us a really interesting talk about all the instruments. I especially liked looking at the keys on the harpsichords because the ebony and ivory had been swapped around on some of them and I wanted to play them. I enjoyed walking around the walled garden and there was a huge pink Magnolia tree.

Kenwood was very nice and I loved the painting by Sir Joshua Reynolds of a little girl standing by a table with sheep and lambs next to her. The garden was very pretty and we ran all the way down to the lake to look at the bridge - and we were very surprised to find out that it was a fake.

Alice: The Coffee Cup was a bit smoky but it was all warm and old-fashioned and felt very homey and I had a delicious cake. I like listening to the music at Burgh House but the exhibition got quite boring and it should have been improved somehow but I don't know how.

Fenton House was really interesting as there were so many little knick knacks to look at. I liked the snuff boxes and the little china houses with chimneys on top to put incense in. Some of the harpsichords had beautiful paintings on them and they were really tempting. I wanted to sit down and play them all. The lady of the house told us that there was a little closet in every room behind the fireplace and I liked going to look for them.

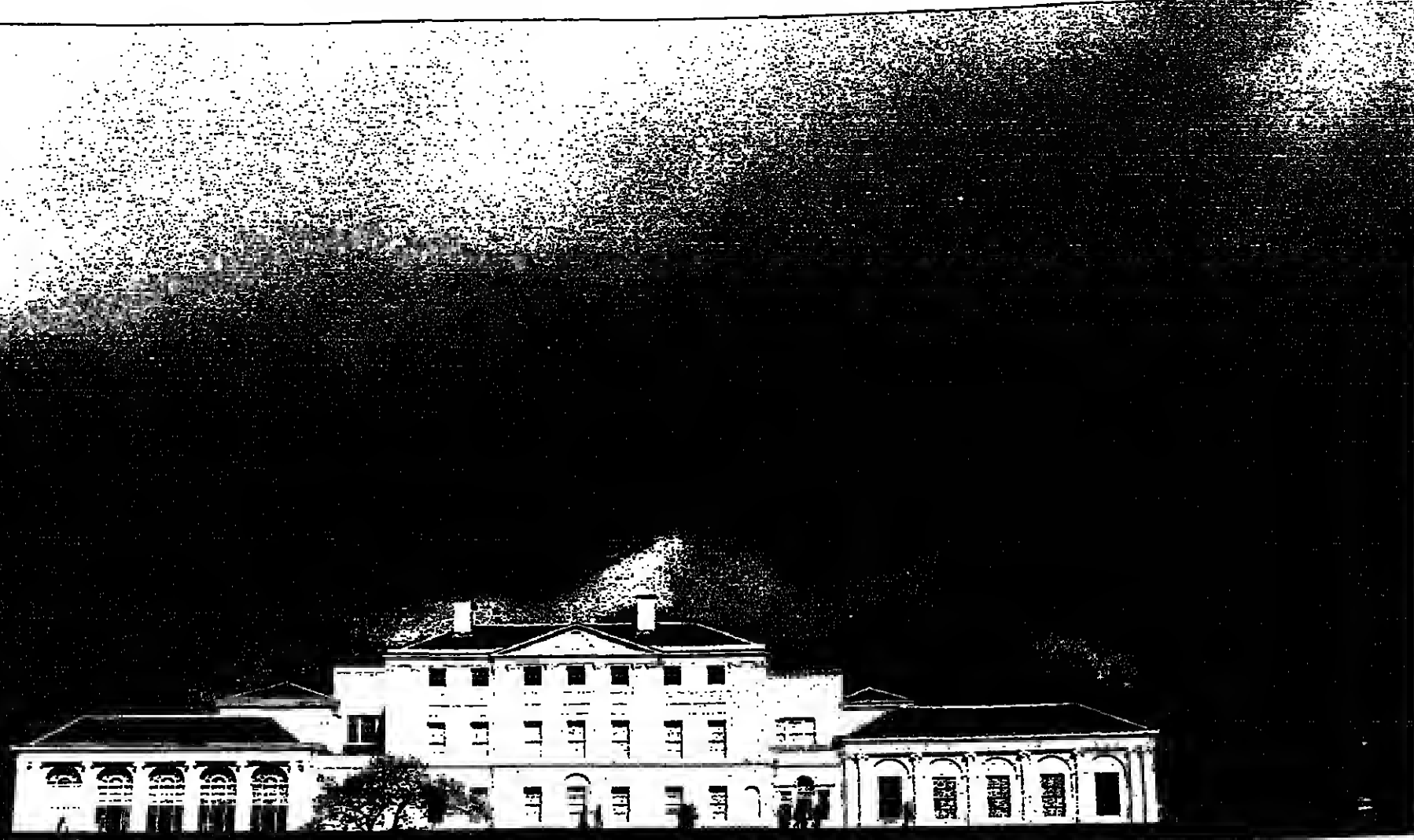
It was very cold outside at Kenwood and inside the rooms seemed empty after Fenton

Jewel in the crown: Kenwood House
Photograph: John Voos

House. I thought the library ceiling was beautiful, it had pictures painted on it in pink and blue and gold and had a frieze of lions.

The deal
Hampstead tube is on the Northern Line on the London Underground.
Burgh House, New End Square (0171 431 0144) open Wed-Sun 12-5pm, free.
Fenton House, Hampstead Grove (0171 435 3471) open March, Sat & Sun 2pm-5pm, April to October Wed, Thurs, Fri 2pm-5.30pm, Sat, Sun 11am-5.30pm, admission adults £3.60, children £1.80.
Kenwood House, Hampstead Lane (0181 348 1286) open daily 10am-6pm, free.
Keats House (0171 435 2062) is closed for refurbishment.

The villa and the village



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The case of Hercule Poirot's Devon

In the first of an occasional series following in the footsteps of fictional characters,

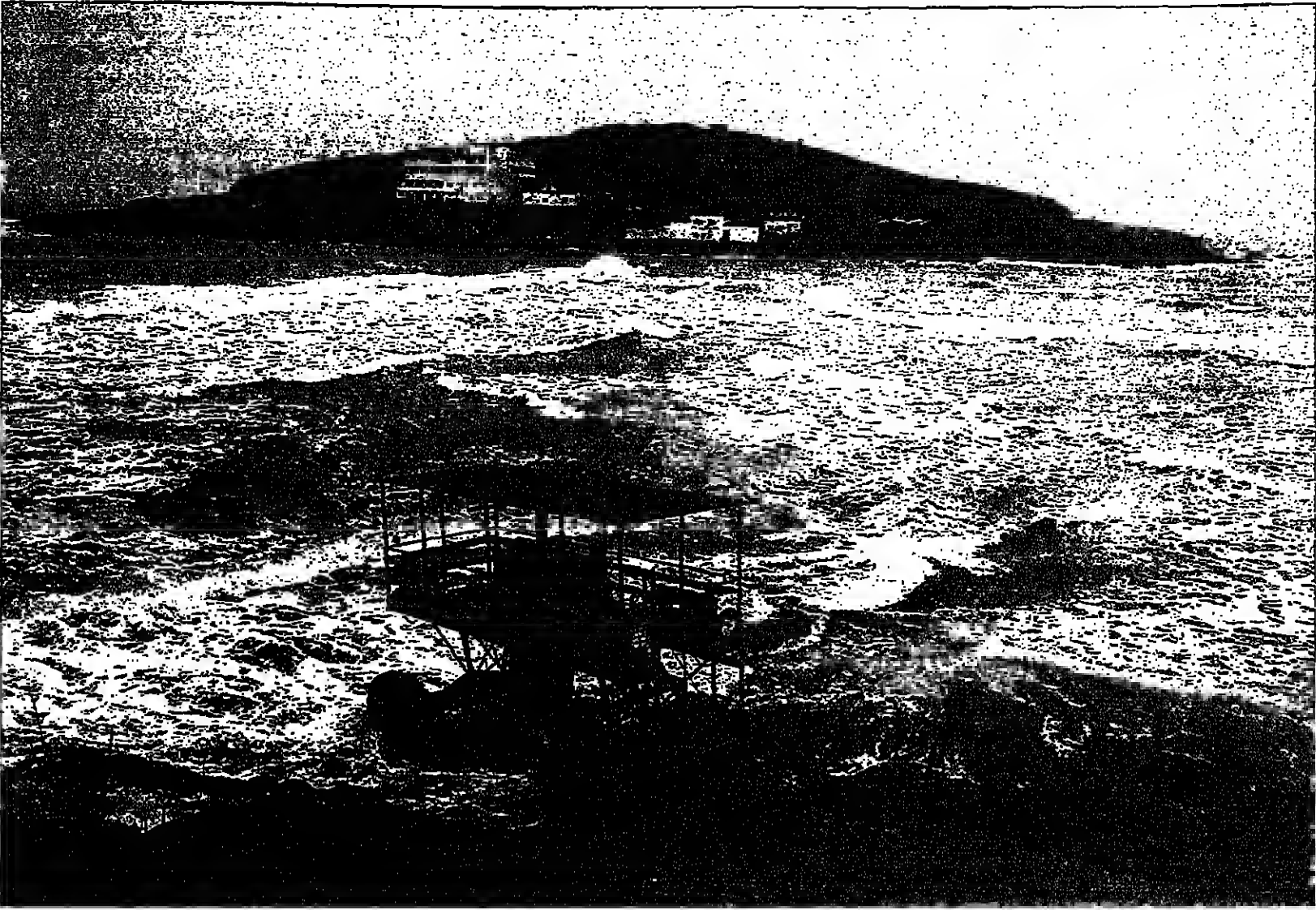
Linda Cookson tracks down Agatha Christie's legendary Belgian detective on two of his notable visits to the south coast

Agatha Christie was born in Torquay in 1890, and retained an enduring love for Devon. Small wonder, then, that several of her Hercule Poirot novels take pleasure in introducing the continental super-sleuth to the delights of her native region.

In 1941, in *Evil Under the Sun*, Poirot is sent on holiday to a place that had particularly captured her imagination. As the book opens, he is reclining in a deckchair - with trademark moustache "magnificently befringed" - surveying the bathing beach of the luxurious "Jolly Roger Hotel" on "Smugglers' Island". Happily, it requires very little detective work for a modern reader to be able to pinpoint the location and, nearly 57 years later, to take almost the same holiday (minus the dead bodies).

Burgh Island, off the coast of South Devon, is connected to the seaside village of Bighury-on-Sea by a sand bar. If the tide is in, you'll need to make the crossing to the tiny island by giant sea tractor, a rickety-looking covered wagon on stilts. On arrival, you'll see the Burgh Island Hotel resting calmly, like a luxury Art Deco liner, amidst the surrounding green. Cross the mirrored foyer to the elegant Peacock Dome cocktail bar, arrange yourself decadently among the potted palms, order an *Evil Under the Sun* cocktail (an appropriately lethal concoction of brandy, apricot brandy, gin, grenadine and orange juice), and drink a toast to Poirot's choice of venue.

For those not already in the know, Burgh Island (which also features in *And Then There Were None*, as Nigger Island) is quite a find. It's a charming place for walking, with coves, beaches, cliff paths, rare flowers - and even a bird sanctuary. It can also lay



The mystery of Burgh Island: how do you get there?

claim to one of Britain's oldest pubs, the Pilchard Inn, built in 1336. But the undisputed jewel in its crown is the hotel itself.

Built in 1929, it became a pleasure palace for the 1930s glitterati. Guests included Noël Coward and Edward and Mrs Simpson, as well as Agatha Christie herself. Over the last 12 years, following decades of dereliction and disrepair, it has been restored by new owners to its former glory.

Non-guests can visit to take afternoon tea in the sun lounge with its fan-shaped glass roof and pastel-coloured Lloyd loom chairs. Or you can book dinner in the period ballroom/restaurant, and dance between

courses beneath romantic lighting from curved Art Deco sconces (formal dress is required). But for the ultimate "get away from it all" experience - and if you want to avail yourself of the pretty private beach and natural swimming pool, where Poirot was seen reclining - book one of the hotel's 14 suites. All have a bedroom, sitting room, private bathroom, sea view and in most cases a balcony, and all are beautifully furnished in the Art Deco style.

Perhaps the most fascinating of Poirot's Devon trips is less immediately relivable. In 1938, in search of a new summer retreat, Agatha Christie bought Greenway House

- a Georgian mansion in dense woodland overlooking the River Dart. The landing stage, Greenway Quay, is a few hundred yards across the water from the picturesque South Hams village of Dittisham. In 1956, in *Dead Man's Folly*, Hercule Poirot pays his creator a visit in her own home.

Invited to solve a mystery by Agatha Christie's tongue-in-cheek alter ego, detective writer Ariadne Oliver, Poirot arrives at "Nasse House" on the "River Helm". To get there, he travels through a typical South Hams landscape, "down a country lane which wound between high hedges on either side. Presently the ground

fell away on the right and disclosed a very beautiful river view with hills of a misty blue in the distance". *Dead Man's Folly* features Greenway House, the boathouse, the quay and the nearby youth hostel, as well as the village of "Gitcham" over the river.

Disappointingly for Agatha Christie fans, a snoop inside Greenway House itself is out of the question. It remains the private family home of the author's daughter and her husband.

The nearest a determined pilgrim can get is to visit Greenway House's gardens on one of the three days a year on which they are open to the public through the

National Garden Scheme (23 and 30 April are the remaining dates this year) or to visit the separate, walled nursery garden on the edge of the grounds. The latter is open to the public most afternoons.

But a stay across the Dart in Dittisham is perfectly possible - and a lovely way of sampling this distinctive riverside setting. The surroundings are reassuringly timeless. The brass bell to summon the ferryman for the crossing to Greenway Quay is still in use at the end of Dittisham's pontoon. And The Ferry Boat Inn - favourite pub in *Dead Man's Folly* of old Merdell, the terraced - remains a convivial watering hole. The village's other pub, the Red Lion, is similarly friendly, and gets its own mention in *Ordeal by Innocence*, a non-Poirot novel set in Dittisham itself.

In its tranquil location, once famous for orchards of damson and plum, Dittisham is basically a potterer's paradise. The pace of life is somewhere between dead slow and stop - ideal for long muddy walks by the river and creeks or across wooded high ground. And the location is especially appealing to river enthusiasts. Even Chief Inspector Bland takes to the water at one point in *Dead Man's Folly*, although Poirot sticks resolutely to dry land.

At Burgh Island Hotel prices for bed, breakfast and dinner per person per night range from £44 to £119 for a stay of five nights or more. For further information (including details about weddings, which can also be arranged on the island) call 01548 310514.

Many visitors to Dittisham choose to rent cottages. The main provider is Dittisham Cottages (01803 722561), which handles 20 or so properties. Teal Hall Cottages (01548 853777) also has attractive properties in the village, mainly on the waterfront. For those in search only of a brief fix of this corner of Poirot's Devon or for those limited to a short stay, the Red Lion Inn (01803 722233) charges £27.50 per person for bed and breakfast in a double room with private bathroom and river view. Bed and breakfast for two with private bathroom in The White House, an 18th-century traditional stone-built cottage, is £25 per person (01803 722355). Cheapest of the lot - and very pleasant - is bed and breakfast at Cott Farm, a working farm just outside the village and with more distant views across the Dart, at £10 per person for a double room (01803 722249).

At Dittisham, boats can be hired. Ring 01803 722375.

Photograph: Apple

A frame around the world

If you really want to expose yourself to world's most beautiful places, says **Eric Kendall**, don't travel with a roof over your head.



One of travel's great ironies is that visiting the place of your dreams leads (little by little) to its ruin. Meanwhile the tourist board tries to preserve its interpretation of what it wants you to see. It's a version of Schrödinger's paradoxical cat: if simply observing something has an effect on it, what does turning

up with 300 tourists in a Boeing do? And never mind "take only pictures and leave only footprints", what about the state of the exhaust on the bus that got you to the remote side of the island/mountain/rain forest in the first place?

The answer to this dilemma is off-road travel on a bicycle.

The people who throw up their hands in horror at the thought of erosion caused by mountain bike tyres in the hills presumably haven't tried riding any distance. It's hard work, which makes it self-limiting. Add enough luggage to survive out in the wilds and you're knackered long before you've made

too many dents in the turf. Which makes it sound about as much fun as mending a puncture in the rain. The trick lies in pacing yourself. Blowing off exactly what you want to chew leaves you in shape to appreciate the best bit - arriving in the most incredible landscapes to find no-one. Nothing to spoil the view, no sound to break the silence.

There is also the physical and mental challenge that is a key component for many "expedition tourists". To start with you simply don't know if you can make it, but succeeding in the face of the unknown is a rare pleasure. Some of these hiking challenges are incremental: working your way day by day from Land's End to John O'Groats, or from Calais to Venice means you don't give the knee-popping total mileage too much thought, and there are roads the whole way.

In the unlikely event of everything all going tediously to plan, it's still an adventure. Your objectives are so uncomplicated that all the great advantages of being out on a bike can be appreciated: your senses are going at full blast while the technical challenge of a rocky track - whether up or down - can be totally absorbing. For the rest of the time, the feeling of exposure to every element and the astonishing views make entering a building, even just a shelter, like switching off the lights. It's an extra reason to sleep al fresco, though there's often no option, anyway.

But if it sounds like a budget nightmare, don't forget that you're only doing it right if your hike costs more than your new kitchen and your paired-down selection of kit is worth substantially more than its weight

in gold. Minimalism is the name of the game, which doesn't come cheap. But it's an extraordinarily complete feeling to know that all you need to survive, day after day, is stashed in a couple of bags on the back of your bike.

In the saddle Off-road touring can be as extreme or gentle as you want to make it but needn't be long-distance or take weeks on end. The UK and Europe are full of weekend opportunities that can easily be reached by train. Mountainous regions generally fulfil all the criteria - they're spectacular, have interesting weather, and are full of tracks but have few roads.

For longer trips, a combination of quality bikes, good equipment and experience are essential, as is choosing the right area - many countries have heavily used roads and appalling standards of driving (whatever your intentions, you will inevitably have to use roads at some point on a trip). Judicious use of public transport is an effective way to save your legs for the best bits. Buses, trains, boats and planes are usually surprisingly accessible with a hike, but double check arrangements before booking tickets. British Airways has given me VIP status just for turning up with a bike. The same can't be said for all the rail services in the UK but the situation seems to be improving.

For access to the Continent, the European Bike Express (01642 251440; evenings: 01642 750077) provides coach travel with a bike trailer to various destinations in France, Italy and Spain.

The Cyclists' Touring Club (Cotterell House, 69 Meadow,

Godalming, Surrey GU7 3HS; tel: 01483 417217; WWW: <http://www.ctc.org.uk>) represents all aspects of cycling in the

UK. Part of their work includes campaigning locally to maintain rights of way for cyclists. Two leaflets on off-road riding are

if simply observing something has an effect on it, what does turning up with 300 tourists and a Boeing do? Try cycling instead. Photographs: Penny Kendall

available to non-members if you send an SAE: Gearing Up, a fact file giving rules and tips for riding off road; and Forest Enterprise, which gives information on forest tracks open to cyclists. Members can also request excellent fact files on countries, which give information on destinations and routes and tips on what to take and when to go.

The Rough Stuff Fellowship (e-mail 100613.2347@compuserve.co) has regional clubs (which predate the invention of the mountain bike) for organised rides off-road.

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They shoot ponies... don't they?

The animals that have formed an essential part of the New Forest scene for centuries have become too numerous. So should we cull them, asks Duff Hart-Davis

Anyone who goes to the New Forest this weekend will see half-wild ponies wandering beside (or on) the roads, grazing in little herds in the open, or in glades among the trees. Observant visitors will also notice that at this time of year every blade of grass is eaten down to a length that would raise no eyebrows on a golf green.

The ponies have been an essential ingredient of the New Forest scene for centuries, and in the past they have been widely used for breeding, for riding, as pets and for meat. Yet today there is almost no demand for them. Until recently numbers were more or less controlled by market forces - but now the market has collapsed, and you can buy an excellent foal for £5.

The result is that stocks have risen to an all-time high, and they are putting an excessive strain on the vegetation. But how to cut numbers down from the total of about 4,000? So old and complex are local traditions that it is extremely difficult to bring about any worthwhile reduction.

The problem derives from the fact that the commoners - the 400-odd people with land in and around the forest - have certain ancient rights, prime among which is that of pasture: the right to graze cattle, ponies, donkeys and (in some cases) sheep on unfenced land. There is no limit on the number of animals that any one commoner may turn out, and nobody has the power to enforce any drastic reduction. The task of supervising the animals' welfare falls on the Agisters, the practical managers, who are servants of the ruling Court of 10 Verderers. Every day in winter and early spring the Agisters are out on the ground, checking the ponies' condition, and in autumn they help the commoners organise more than 40 drifts, or round-ups, in which the ponies are driven in and herded into corrals for branding and worming.

Each year the Verderers hold two stallion inspections, at which animals are checked for conformation. The great majority pass, and go on for veterinary tests, but any that fail



Population explosion: there are now about 4,000 New Forest ponies

Photograph: John Lawrence

must be removed from the forest. This, then, is one form of quality control. The ideal New Forest pony - recognised as a breed of its own - is a stocky creature of about 13 hands. It can be light grey, black, bay or chestnut; all colours are accepted except skewbalds, piebalds and blue-eyed creams. Yet the rules remain very loose. Although all stallions must be registered at two years of age through the New Forest Breeding and Cattle Society, many mares remain unregistered, and sub-standard specimens are easy to find.

Nobody knows the ponies better than the Head Agister, Brian Ingram, whose family have been commoners for generations. Brian was born in the forest, had his first pony at 14, and took up the job of Agister when a place became vacant in 1959, while he was still doing national service.

"Numbers are a problem now," he agrees. "But it isn't our job to tell commoners how many animals they can keep. A lot comes down to the individual's sense of responsibility."

Even so, a new attempt is now being made to start improving quality. This is an annual competition,

launched this spring and partly financed by a Life Two grant from Brussels, in which premiums of £100 will be awarded to the four mares judged best, with 500 premiums of £55 apiece to the runners-up.

The contest was the idea of Richard Stride, scion of another commoning family, and a Forestry Commission keeper. He is disappointed that only 900 mares were entered this first year, but points out that "commoners are very suspicious of anything new. Now that they realise there's nothing sinister in the scheme, there'll be more of them in it next time."

Why, if the ponies are all but worthless, do people keep so many of them? "Purely out of sentiment and tradition," he says. Yet the point is that, in conservation terms, the animals do an indispensable job. Apart from grass, their favourite foods are heather, gorse and holly, and by their continuous browsing they keep the forest open. Without their formidable eating-power, the whole place would become choked with undergrowth, because the cost of clearing it mechanically would be impossibly high. Boggy areas, now rich in plant and wildlife, would turn

to jungle, for heavy machines cannot work on such soft ground.

The ponies' appetite for spiky holly leaves is amazing. In winter, when the foresters start pollarding the trees, the scream of chain saws draws prospective diners from far and wide: they have learnt that the noise heralds a banquet, and gather eagerly to munch the manna falling out of the sky.

Looking ahead, Richard Stride has a simple plan for redressing the present imbalance. "The commoners are in the driving seat, if only they'd realise it," he says. "They should harden their hearts and cull half the ponies."

He reckons that if the total came down to 2,000, undergrowth would begin to engulf the forest, to the chagrin of the seven million tourists who visit every year. The change would also alarm English Nature, which, together with the Forestry Commission, is responsible for conservation. Goaded by visions of the whole area running out of control, Mr Stride believes the authorities would step in with financial incentives to push numbers back to an ideal total of around 2,500.

Nature note

In all the spring eruption of greenery along road verges and field margins, nothing grows more vigorously than stinging nettles. Isabella Beeton, writing in 1861, declared that "young nettles are very pleasant to eat, resembling spinach," and gave recipes for nettle broth, soup and beer. Rustic apothecaries once recommended nettle tea as a cure for sciatica, arthritis and pimples, and a generation ago Richard Mabey extolled the delights of nettle haggis in his splendid *Food for Free*.

Today, however, it is hard to think of any plant more useless to the rural economy. Sheep and cattle won't touch nettles, because the leaves are defended by guard hairs called trichomes, each tipped by a pointed cell which can penetrate skin and then break off, releasing a poisonous fluid. Anyone who has fallen into a bed of nettles will know how the stings bring up itching white blisters. The best remedy is also one of the oldest: to rub the area vigorously with a dock-leaf.

Nettles are greedy: they flourish in good soil, and absorb a lot of water. They can rapidly invade pastures and are hard to eradicate. Farmers spend thousands spraying them with herbicide, only to see them spring up in the same places next year.

Duff Hart-Davis



What, when, where ...

Rise from the grave and make your way towards Whitby on 24 April for a "Gothic weekend". Tune your bloodless ears to the music of Die Laughing, Nekromantik and All Living Fear, and rummage through the coffin closets at a Gothic Brag & Buy Bizarre Bazaar. Later on, pop into St Mary's churchyard which was the inspiration for some of the scenes in Bram Stoker's

19th-century novel *Dracula*. Proceeds from the Gothic raffle go towards the Bat Conservation fund.

"Goths" meet on Thursday evening at Whitby's Buck Inn, on Friday evening at the Elfrine pub, and on Saturday at Whitby Spa Theatre (tickets £6). More information from Whitby Tourist Information 01947 602674.

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Art or craft? A suburban patch transformed

Workshop: How do you create a garden in keeping with a Lutyens house? Anna Pavord offers some advice

We live in an Arts and Crafts period house in Hampstead Garden Suburb, one of seven terraced houses, designed by Lutyens, set round a square with formal front gardens. The houses are deemed to be of special architectural interest and are Grade II listed. It is our back garden which presents the problem. It is oblong and measures roughly 50ft wide by 40ft deep. It's a mess and badly needs to be rethought. We love the house and its setting but are ashamed of the garden in its present state. We are keenly aware of the importance of getting the garden right - mistakes can't be hidden in a small space. We are also keen to create a garden which is in harmony with its overall setting.



In search of harmony: Maralyn Roberts plans a recreation of an Arts and Crafts garden in Hampstead Garden Suburb
Photography: Nicola Harris

Maralyn Roberts wrote this letter after reading a piece I'd written about Arts and Crafts gardens for the *Independent* magazine. She, her husband and their two daughters moved into their home five years ago. Having finished updating the inside, she's now anxious to get to grips with the outside and create a setting that will reflect the special period quality of the house.

The little square is an unexpected delight, designed by Edwin Lutyens in 1909 with his usual fine attention to detail. The layout is simple and formal, the houses built of lavender grey brick, contrasting with a redder brick used round doors and windows. The most prominent houses, facing on to the road, have bow fronts with chequerboard squares of brick, alternating with clunch.

Which of the pictures of Arts and Crafts gardens in the original magazine piece most closely reflected the kind of gar-

den Mrs Roberts dreamed of? She pointed first to the neat clipped box hedges and topiary peacocks of the white garden at Hidcote in Gloucestershire, then at a length of drystone walling running parallel with Lutyens' water rill at Hestercombe in Somerset.

Well, that's a lot to get into a rectangle 50ft x 40ft, but it gave me a good idea of Mrs Roberts' taste. And as it happened, elements of both could easily fit into the space they've got. The main door into the garden leads on to an uneven concrete area which is crying out to be repaved in brick, laid herringbone fashion, like the original parquetry floor in the house.

The garden is wider than it is long, which is unusual in London, but the dimensions (5:4) are comfortable ones to work with. A very rough retaining wall, built of clinker and covered in mounds of periwinkle and

candytuft, separates the concreted area (which continues as a path along the back of the house) from the rest of the garden, set about three feet higher.

Privet hedges bound the garden on three sides and must be kept. The Hampstead Garden Suburb Trust is (quite rightly) fierce in protecting the area, and all residents have to submit plans for any alterations, even in their gardens. It was important that any new work should be sympathetic and likely to gain approval.

A wide border runs back from the top of the retaining wall, and most of the rest of the garden is lawn. The border is in the right place as the plants there will not have to share their food and drink with privet, which is a greedy beast.

You could fill it with old-fashioned flowers: peonies, columbines, poppies, tulips and lilies. The garden is formal in shape,

and Lutyens' overall design for the close is formal, too. It seemed silly to fight against that. Straight lines would be better than wiggles.

I suggested that the retaining wall be replaced with a hener built one, using the flat, thin stones that Lutyens so often favoured for garden walls. Wide, shallow steps would line up with the door from the house to lead into the higher level.

Mrs Roberts wanted a pond. This could sit in the centre of the lawn, a plain rectangular pool made in the same 5:4 proportions as the rest of the garden and painted black inside to reflect the sky. The edging needed to be plain and restrained: cut York stone like the paths that Lutyens had laid to the front doors of the houses.

Along the back boundary, set in a narrow border in front of the privet facing the house, the Robertses could plant

cordon pears in a criss-cross trellis pattern. Arts and Crafts gardeners loved fruit trees, and this would provide a decorative element without having to widen the border there. A mixture of Williams Bon Chretien, Fondante d'Automne, Beurre Hardy and Packham's Triumph would provide blossom and fruit over a long season.

The lawn would need to be relaid once the pool was in place and the proportions of the lawn redrawn, making it less wide in relation to its depth. You could do this by nibbling at the borders on the right- and left-hand boundaries. At the moment, they are no more than a foot or so wide, leaving no space to plant in front of the privet.

When the lawn had been restored to more pleasing proportions, I'd surround it, Hidcote style, with a low clipped box

hedge and add two big box balls, one on either side of the stone steps leading up to the grass.

Against the south-facing, left-hand border, the Robertses had put their rustic bench. It's the right place for it, because this is the sunniest spot in the garden. They could put up a wire arbour round it and grow rambling roses over it to swamp the seat with scent. Mrs Roberts could also use this widened south-facing border for the herbs she is keen to grow.

So the actual layout of the garden could be resolved quite simply, but its success will depend absolutely on the quality of the materials used in its reconstruction. Lutyens' modern engineering brick will not be a good match for Lutyens' originals. The Robertses will have to hunt reclamation yards to find matching bricks to cover the concrete area outside the dining room door.

And once they have got the bricks, they need a craftsman who knows how to lay them. Attention to detail was the trademark of the Arts and Crafts period. If the bricks are laid herringbone fashion, they ought perhaps to be enclosed in a border of bricks laid end to end in straight runs. And the Robertses might like to design a centrepiece for the brick terrace, as Gertrude Jekyll often did with her paths. They could set scraps of flint in a square, round a sunken nest of clay flowerpots - nothing too showy.

The retaining wall needs to look good too: concrete blocks, even rendered ones, will not do. The texture of the retaining wall that Mrs Roberts liked in the Hestercombe picture can't be achieved without using the same materials. And there must be plenty of space between the stonnes for hanging swings of Spanish daisy and small blue harebells. Texture comes expensive in London, but a Lutyens house shouldn't be fobbed off with less.

CUTTINGS

"You thought that highlighting brown-tipped spider plants might be a mistake," writes Marian Wilson of Ravenshead, Nottingham, referring to a piece that appeared in *Cuttings* (Independent 28 February). "I have two large spider plants, which in spite of pampering, still dangle their brown tips. I tear them off in frustration, but the brownness creeps higher until, in the end, I've performed a complete leafectomy. I suspect the fault lies in under or overwatering. But which?"

That's one of the tricky things about houseplants. Symptoms often have entirely opposite causes.



But spider plants are greedy things and brown tips on leaves are often the result of underfeeding. They like to lap up Baby Bio every time they are watered.

Another common cause of brown tips is central heating. The plants can't take in water as fast as

they are losing it. Spider plants need liberal watering from now until autumn, though less during winter. If they are watered too much while they are growing slowly, they often develop unsightly brown streaks along the leaves.

Anyone heading to the West Country should make their way to the Lost Gardens of Heligan, where the Cornwall Garden Society is holding a spectacular Theatre of Flowers from 24-26 April (open 10am to 6pm, admission £5). Competitions, displays, demonstrations, music take place in the dramatically restored splendour of the Heligan garden, star of the recent television series. For further information phone 01726 844157.

WEEKEND WORK

Unfortunately we do not seem to be as far into spring as we were in February. I'm anxious about frost as many plants are ludicrously far advanced in growth. Our gunnera was smashed back by a late frost a few years ago and has taken time to build up its confidence again. Another shock might be terminal.

The rain has been ideal for newly planted trees and the like. Soak all bare-rooted trees in a bucket for an hour and stand plants in pots to soak in a tray overnight before they are planted. This will keep them ticking over.

Continue to plant vegetables when conditions seem tolerable. I have just put in two short rows of a French potato called Belle de Fontenay (Marshall's, £8.95 for 2kg). It makes smooth, kidney-shaped tubers with creamy

yellow flesh, excellent for potato salad. It's usually ready for lifting by the middle of June. The first row of rocket (Marshall's, 66p) has also gone in. It is as easy as mustard and cress to grow. Sow at two-week intervals for a permanent supply of young leaves. Growing your own highlights the outrageous price that rocket sells for in supermarkets. Try some on a window sill.

Mark barren daffodil clumps with a cane to remind you to lift, separate and replant the congested bulbs some time between July and September - well before the new season's growth starts again. A generous handful of bonemeal or some proprietary bulb booster added now will help to bulk up the bulbs and encourage them to perform well next season. Some people use foliar feeds for the same purpose.

Hyacinths can be planted outside when they have finished flowering indoors - with a handful of bonemeal to build them up. They sometimes take a season to recover.

Continue to sow seeds of annual flowers and prick out seedlings showing their first pairs of true leaves. I have been pricking out Zinnia Alberts (Mr Fothergill, £1). I fell for zinnias in a big way after seeing a fabulous hed of them at Great Dixter. Christopher Lloyd's garden in Sussex. He says the secret is to grow them without a check. They hate disturbance at the roots, so I've been pricking them out into single pots.

Keep on top of weeds. Bittercress and groundsel are in flower now and both are dedicated procreators.

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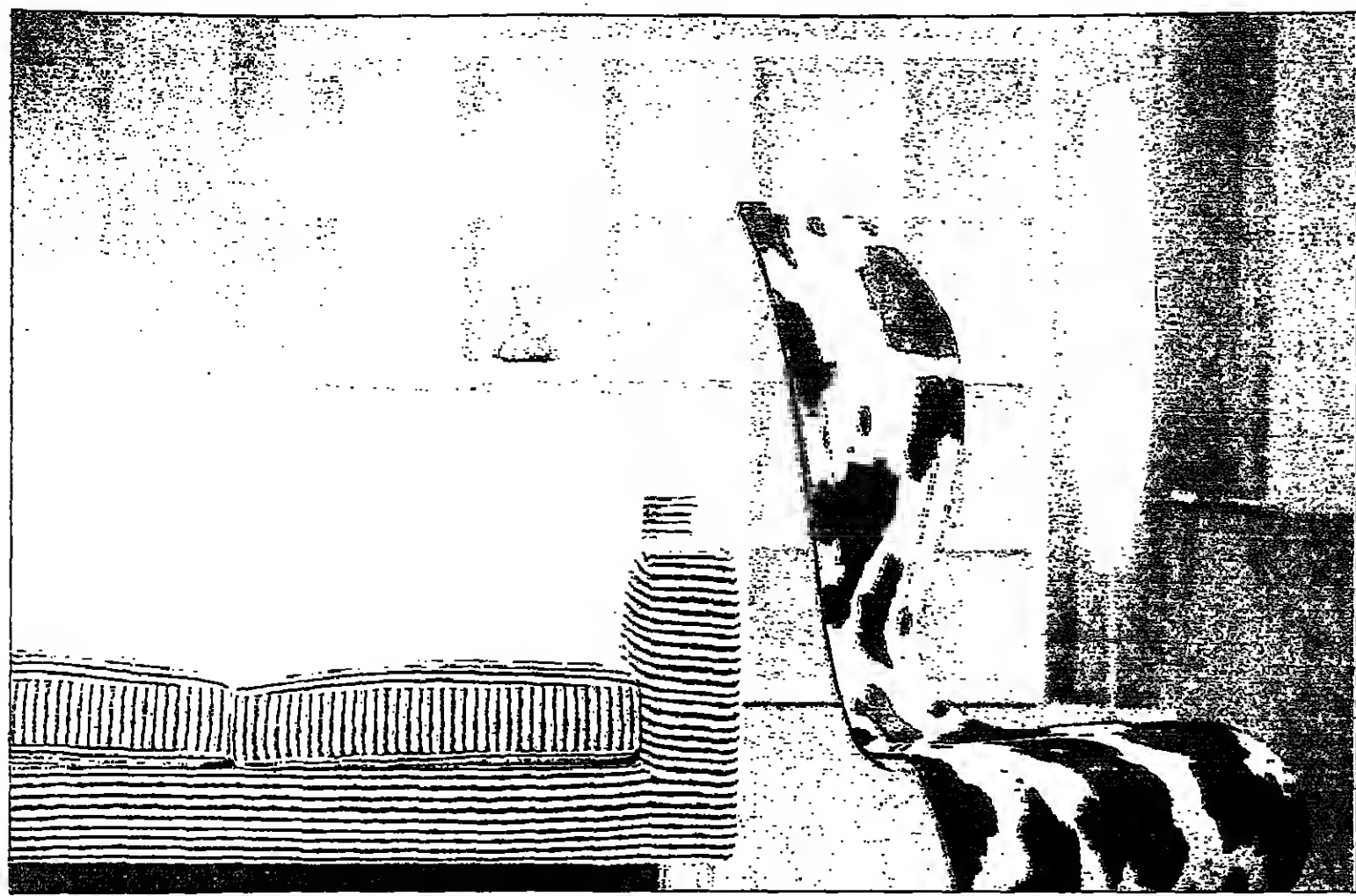
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Watch whose chair you sit in

The stuff of ... cool
Caledonia. Designer
heaven is alive and well
in Glasgow, writes
Sally Staples

If you want to combine avant-garde with the functional when you go furniture shopping, take a trip to Glasgow's Italian Centre and visit Nice House. There's a range of flamboyant designs in homeware and lighting that can only

be classified as distinctly cool. It might be hard to lounge in the distinctive Tom Dixon S-shaped chair (£950) but it certainly makes an eye-catching piece of furniture.

Another popular item at Nice House is the indestructible aluminium prison chair at a more accessible £195. And for those who want something to relax on, how about Antonio Citterio's luxurious three-seater Harry sofa popular?

Nice House also distributes for the Dutch company Droog and the accessories department offers innovative designs in glassware: Pyrex milk and sugar pourers (£42.25) and a selection of cobalt wobble vases - from around

£40. There are designer corkscrews and lemon squeezers, ashtrays and wine racks...

Manager Andy Garrold explains that Nice House aims to bring together products that are the epitome of good design in terms of both function and aesthetics. "Furniture, lighting and accessories from throughout Europe and America designed during the 20th century can be seen on display on the showroom floor. Classics from the design greats - Le Corbusier's 1927 Chaise Longue, for example - sell to those keen to buy themselves a piece of design history. And alongside that are contemporary items like the S-chair for those wishing to have a piece of cutting-edge design in their homes."

Seating arrangements: postural control, Tom Dixon style

The hallmark of designer products is often a breathtaking price tag and bargain hunters might find £5,000 for a Siem storage system a little steep for a series of box-like shelves. The Quick-Box at £260, is a neat way to convert a storage space into a desk - ideal for those who work from home and have limited space.

Nice House is at The Italian Centre Courtyard, Glasgow G1 1HD (0141 553 1377)

A good weed

The taste of ... the sea. The coast around the French port of Roscoff has become one of the most important areas for harvesting seaweed, writes Nikki Spencer

Any day now, this year's seaweed harvest will begin on the beaches of Brittany. Using ancient-looking scythes, a team of specially trained pickers will wade through rock pools, cutting the weed by hand, making sure to leave a stem so it can grow back again for the next year.

The amount harvested - between 100 and 500 kilos a day - is nothing in comparison to that collected and consumed in Japan, where they harvest the stuff using a machine looking like a cross between a land-craft and a combine harvester. But it is particularly significant because of the variety of seaweeds that grow in Brittany, and the quality of the water.

Every day, weather permitting, from now on until October the seaweed will be cut, put into buckets and taken to the village of St Pol de Leon, where it is sorted, washed and packed in salt ready to be dispatched to restaurants and supermarkets all over France, the UK (this is where Tesco, who started selling seaweed last autumn, get their supplies) and even Japan, when certain varieties are in short supply.

Until about 15 years ago, the main reason seaweed was collected in this area was for use in cosmetics and to provide fertiliser for growing the cauliflowers and artichokes for which the region is well known.

About 17 years ago, local people started to harvest and sell edible seaweed to restaurants. Michel Perzinsky and his partner Monique Vernier saw a gap in the market and set up Algopus, a company that not only sells marine

algae as a fresh vegetable and in every conceivable form (seasonings, soups, sauces and bath products) but also provides thousands of visitors every year with tours of their factory and seaweed tastings.

Where to find seaweed

Many restaurants in and around Roscoff now cook with seaweed. Two where you can eat an entire seaweed menu of starter, main course and dessert - you can have a type of ice-cream with seaweed sprinkled on it - are: Le Temp de Vivre, Place de l'Eglise, Roscoff (00-332 98.61.27.28) and La Pomme D'Api, 49 Rue de Verdere, St Pol de Leon (00-332 98.69.04.36).

At one of the best known chocolate shops in Brittany - and even in France - Histoire de Chocolat, 60 Rue de Siam in Brest (00-332 98.44.66.09) you can even buy chocolate with seaweed. The shop also operates a mail-order service.

Seaweed from Brittany is available at some branches of Tesco, price £1.99 for a 100g punnet. There are two varieties. Sea lettuce is green and feathery and can be used in cooked dishes or salads, and dulse is in rich red ribbon-like strips and is popular in soups and with pasta.

For tours of the seaweed factory and tastings contact Monique Vernier at Algopus, Rue St Marie, St Pol de Leon, near Roscoff (00-332 98.29.13.06). The company is moving to larger premises in Roscoff in the summer.

GAMES

Look at these two sets of words:

1A: STICK, LIGHT, BIRTHDAY
1B: PARTY, ROUND, MARK.

In one of the sets, the three words have a common association - a word that can be linked to all three of them. In the other set, however, no such connection is intended to exist. Here are two more such sets:

2A: HOUSE, LION, BUTTER
2B: MAGIC, PLUSH, FLOOR

3A: WATER, TOBACCO, LINE
3B: SIXTEEN, SPIN, TENDER

I came across these puzzles in *Hare Brain, Tortise Mind*, by Guy Claxton (published by 4th Estate, £16.99), one of the most thoughtful books about thinking I have come across in a long time. As word-puzzles, there is nothing particularly

THINKING WILLIAM HARTSTON

special or unusual here, but Claxton cites them in the context of a revealing psychological experiment.

Subjects were given these and similar lists and asked to spot the connections. If they could not find the connecting words, they were asked to guess which of the triples had something in common. The results showed that even when people could not work out the right answer, they guessed correctly more often than would have been expected by chance.

One could, of course, put this down to some hidden linguistic similarity between words that have a common linkage. Perhaps they have more in common than the experimenters thought. Perhaps the experimenters were subconsciously making the triples of unconnected words even more unconnected than they might have been. That theory, however, is firmly countered by an

even more striking experiment devised by Pawel Lewicki at the University of Tulsa.

Subjects were given a simple task involving numbers on a computer screen. For the purpose of the experiment, the screen is divided into four quarters by a vertical cross through the centre. Scattered about each quarter, a jumble of five digits appears, and the subject has to push one of four buttons to indicate which quadrant contains the sole number 6. After a pause, a different display of numbers appears, and the subject does it again. After seven trials, there is a longer pause, then seven more, followed by more blocks of seven.

With practice, subjects get faster. Now - and here comes the crucial point - although the location of the 6 appears to move randomly, there is a very subtle pattern hidden in the experimental design. It turns out that if you know where the 6 is in trials

one, three, four and six of each set of seven, then you can work out where it will appear on trial number seven.

No subjects are told about the pattern; when asked after the experiments whether they have spotted a pattern they all say no; and when told there is a pattern and asked if they can work it out, nobody has yet done so. Yet the experiments show that when subjects have reached optimal speed, their response times to every seventh trial are quicker than on the other six.

Unconsciously, we can detect and act upon patterns of which we are consciously unaware. We know things without knowing we know them, and act accordingly. Claxton's book is full of examples such as this. Of course, we all know them all the time. But you need to read the book to know that you know them.

CONNECTIONS: 1A (Candle); 2B (Carpet); 3A (Pipe).

PANDORA MELLY GAMES PEOPLE PLAY

Stephen Watt-Smith, 49, maxillofacial surgeon

From my point of view, a game is the challenge of a three-dimensional problem. If it's a hole in the tummy, you just stitch up the wound, and other people won't know that there's four feet of bowel missing, or whatever.

When you reconstruct a face, you're dealing with function and appearance. If I make a new lower jaw and I get the angle wrong, then your teeth won't meet properly, chewing is compromised and speech deteriorates. People's social lives are destroyed very quickly if they're made miserable every time they look in a mirror.

The trouble with a face is that you can't de-glove its soft tissues. Until recently, if I was attempting to make a jaw, all I could do was guess at where the majority of the bone was arranged beneath the soft tissues. And if I got it wrong - when I was rebuilding an eye-socket for instance - then the patient developed double vision, which is very disturbing.

To cut quite a long story short, we now have a computerised system that can make an accurate model of any part of the patient's skull. All the little nooks and crannies are reproduced, and I can practise any surgery on-screen, or manufacture implants or plates before we actually go into the operating theatre. A sort of Blue Peter "Here's one I made earlier".

The game is identifying the problem and beating it. I'm a lousy loser. I might graciously shake hands with people after a cricket match, but I can't tolerate being less than perfect.

Some of the reconstructive surgery we did 20 years ago was so poor that we didn't dare ask the patients what they thought about it. If you're drooling saliva, and your facial appearance is grossly abnormal, then the quality of life isn't good enough.

Useful background material on this subject may be found in *Art and the Full Prostheses* by Edward Samson, Sadie; however, that book has been out of print for some 20 years.

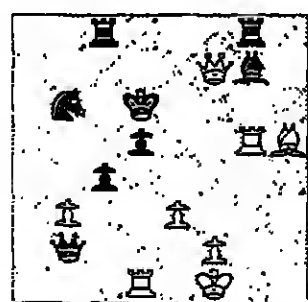
CHESS: WILLIAM HARTSTON

You can divide strong players into two groups: those who are good at making things happen in their games, and those who are good at preventing things from happening - the proactive and the reactive, one might say. World champions such as Fischer and Kasparov fall into the proactive category. Their games shine with an energy that drives the game onwards and dictates the course of events. Champions such as Petrosian and Karpov, however, fall more naturally into the reactive category. Their strength lies in anticipating the opponent's plans and slowly stifling them.

Of British grandmasters, one man who is always trying to push the position into doing what he wants is James Plaskett. Even when things get totally out of control, as they do in the following game from the latest round of the 4NCL in Birmingham, you feel that he deliberately steered it off the highway.

White's 10.Qb3 made very little sense. Quite apart from allowing Black to double his f-pawns, White decided against capturing on h7 anyway. Black obtained a comfortable game from the opening, and White's 13.Kf1 followed by f4 and h4 was more an attempt to create a messy position than a logical attacking plan.

When Black played 18...h5, he must have been very content. 20.Bxb5 is met by 20...Nxd5 when both

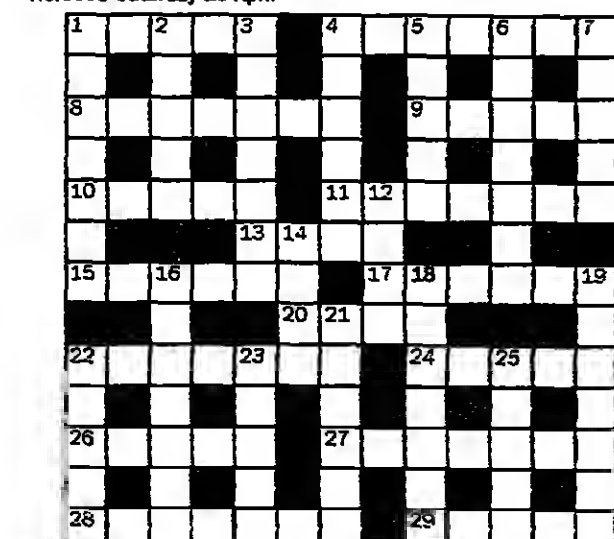


21.Rxd5 Bxc3 and 21.Bxd7 Nxc3+ win material for Black. Accepting the piece offer with 24...Qxb5, Black simply did not believe White's attack on the other wing, but with his king lured out into the open, the defence quickly proved too difficult. At the end (see diagram) 35.R1xd5+ Nxd5 (or 35...Kc6 36.Rc5+ Kd6 37.Rg5+) 36.Rxd5+ Kc6 37.Qd7+ Kb6 38.Rh5+ Ka6 39.Qh7 is mate.

White: James Plaskett
Black: Nigel Povah
1 d4 Nf6 19 axb5 axb5
2 c4 e6 20 Nxb5 Nxd5
3 Nf3 c5 21 Rh3 N7b6
4 d5 cxd5 22 f5 Qd7
5 cxd5 d6 23 h5 c4
6 Nc3 g6 24 hxg6 Qxb5
7 Bg5 Bg7 25 gxf7+ Kxf7
8 c3 a6 26 f6 Nxf6
9 a4 Bg4 27 Bxf6 Kxf6
10 Qb3 Bxf3 28 Qxh7 Qe5
11 gxf3 0-0 29 Rg3 Rg8
12 Be2 Nbd7 30 Qh4+ Kf7
13 Kf1 Qc7 31 Bh5+ Ke6
14 f4 Rfe8 32 Rg5 Qh2
15 Qc2 b6 33 Qf4 d5
16 Rd1 Qh7 34 Qf7+ Kd6
17 h3 Rac8 Black resigned
18 h4 b5

CONCISE CROSSWORD

No.3588 Saturday 18 April



- ACROSS
1 Follow (5)
4 Story told by Jesus (7)
8 Serious (7)
9 Loud (5)
10 Projection forming part of carpentry joint (5)
11 Row of houses (7)
13 Son of Adam (4)
15 Mob (6)
17 Points to be decided (6)
20 Teenage spots (4)
22 Financial support (7)
24 At no time (5)
26 Fire-raising (5)
27 Defensive tower (7)
28 Hold spellbound (7)
29 Source of energy (5)
- DOWN
1 Voter (7)
2 Temptress (5)
3 Everlasting (7)
4 Small and dainty (6)
5 Happen again (5)
6 Haggle (7)
7 Run off together (5)
12 Dash (4)
14 Part of necklace (4)
16 Look after child (4-3)
18 OT book (7)
19 Word formed from initials (7)
21 Musical instrument (6)
22 Allotted portion (5)
23 Interior (5)
25 Speech organ (5)

Solution to yesterday's Concise Crossword:
ACROSS: 1 Her, 3 Scum (Expos), 7 Misadventure, 9 Ovary, 9 Congregation, 10 Slop, 12 Pledge, 14 Constabulary, 18 Menu, 19 Magnolia, 20 Agent, 21 Yet, 22 Plunge, 23 Spleen, 25 Omega, 26 Admit, 27 Agony.

BRIDGE: ALAN HIRON

Game all; dealer South			
North		East	
♠ Q 10 9 8		♠ 3	
♥ 7 4		♥ A 9 6 3	
♦ 7 6 5 2		♦ 10 8 4	
♣ Q 10 4		♣ A 8 6 3 2	
South		West	
♠ A K J 7		♠ 6 5 4 2	
♥ Q J 5		♥ K 10 8 2	
♦ A K Q		♦ J 9 3	
♣ K J 7		♣ 9 5	

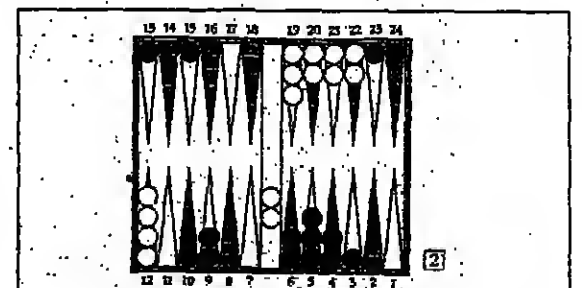
Even one-word pleasantries at the table can prove costly. There was the British player who reached Six No-trumps, inspected dummy to see 13 top tricks and said: "Pity!" His French opponents claimed that he had called: "Petit!" (which would have enabled them to win a trick). Fortunately, the tournament director was bilingual.

There was a less happy ending on this deal where South ended in Four Spades. The defence started with H2 to the ace, H3 to the jack and king and, after some thought, a third heart. It seemed clear that the suit was breaking 4-4 so, after studying dummy's spot cards closely, declarer flamboyantly requested: "Anything!" Dummy chose D2.

Two rounds of trumps then revealed the 4-1 break and, forced to abandon trumps, declarer tried the clubs. But East ducked the first round, and now there was no way of avoiding either a club ruff or, if trumps were drawn, CA and another heart.

So what should dummy have played at trick three? A club discard is surely best; then, as long as the clubs are not 6-1, the suit can be played safely after two rounds of trumps when the 4-1 break is discovered.

BACKGAMMON: CHRIS BRAY



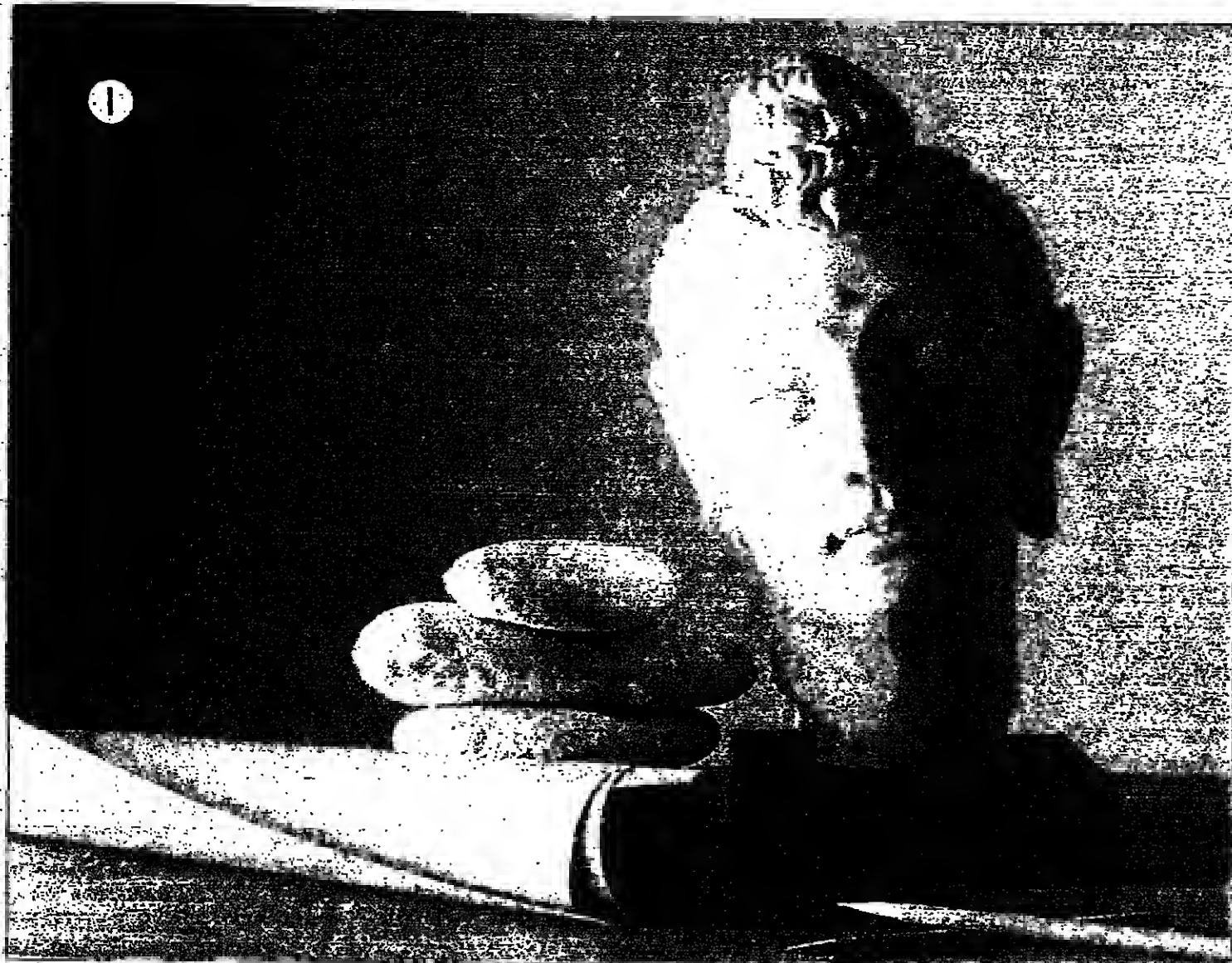
This position caused heated argument in the Doublie Fives chouette the other night. White (the team) had doubled early and then Black (the box) had turned the game around and put two of White's men on the bar. The box now redoubled. Three of the four team members dropped the double with but a moment's thought. The fourth (and strongest) member pondered long and hard but eventually he too dropped the double, muttering something like "I'm sure it's a take but we will lose a lot of gammons so maybe it's a drop."

This is not an easy position to evaluate but over the board White should reason something like this: "Black is likely to make his 3-point next roll but after that he is likely to try to prime my men rather than blitz them, as my strong home board will deter him from the blitzing option. This will give me time to bring in my two men and anchor on either his 1-point or 2-point. From there I will have a reasonable chance to hit a shot and win the game. Additionally, Black may not cover his blot on the 3-point and if I hit it I will be well back into the game. Finally Black may have difficulty getting his men out of my home board and I may get the chance to hit one of them as he tries to bring them around the board. All in all I think I have enough chances to win that I can accept the double, despite the gammon risk."

The lesson is that you cannot just glance at the board, see two men on the bar and drop the double. You must consider all aspects of the position and try to understand how the game will develop and what your winning variations could be. Occasionally you will still get it wrong but that is better than just making a subjective decision. Objective analysis pays dividends.

The stronger player in the chouette was swayed by the opinions of his weaker partners. He should have believed in his own analysis and taken the double.

مكتبة الأمل



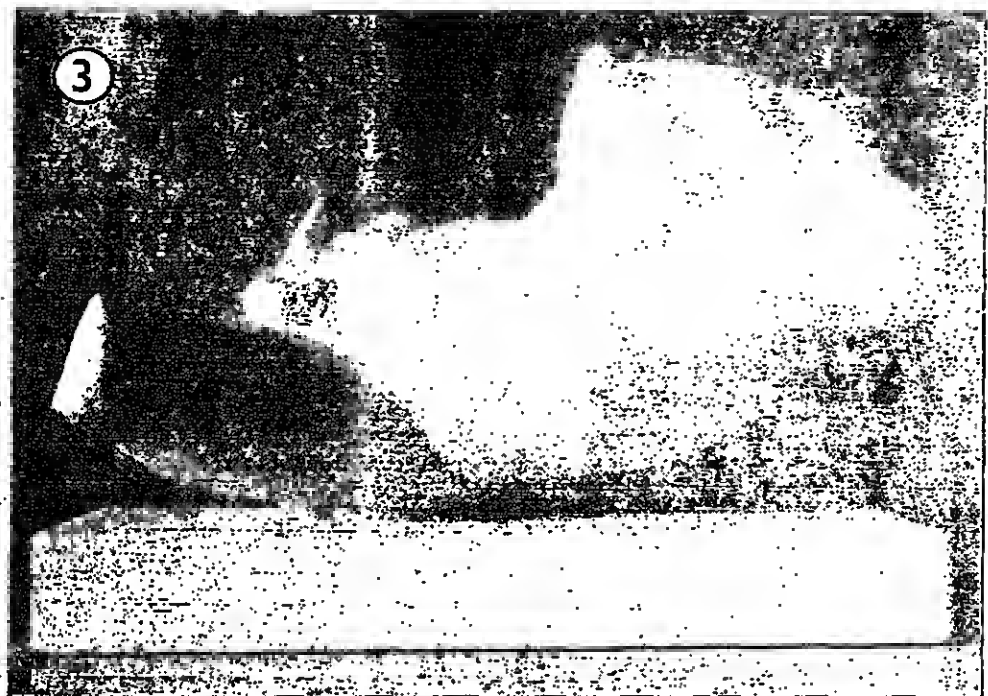
Set in stone

Reproduction art can be clichéd – but who has a classical statue in their living room, asks Claire Gervat

What is it about statues? People fret about the pictures they hang on the wall, but ignore the potential of a well placed sculpture to add an immediate dramatic focus to a room. It can't be a question of price alone; it's been a long time since wealthy travellers on the Grand Tour were the only ones able to pick up some remnant of classical statuary to decorate the family pad.

The difference nowadays is that the humble shopper has access to a range of high-quality reproductions in modern materials that mimic expensive marbles and bronzes. Not only that, many are available from the comfort of the nearest armchair – and often for less than the price of a night on the town.

Happily, these copies are nearly always less obvious than reproductions of famous paintings: the original of the head of Buddha, for instance, belongs to the Victoria & Albert Museum in London, but will not draw cries of recognition in the way a Monet copy would. However, if you do feel your statue is a little too obviously new, you can always age it. There are plenty of home decoration books with detailed instructions on all kinds of antiquing effects, so you shouldn't have much trouble finding one that suits you.



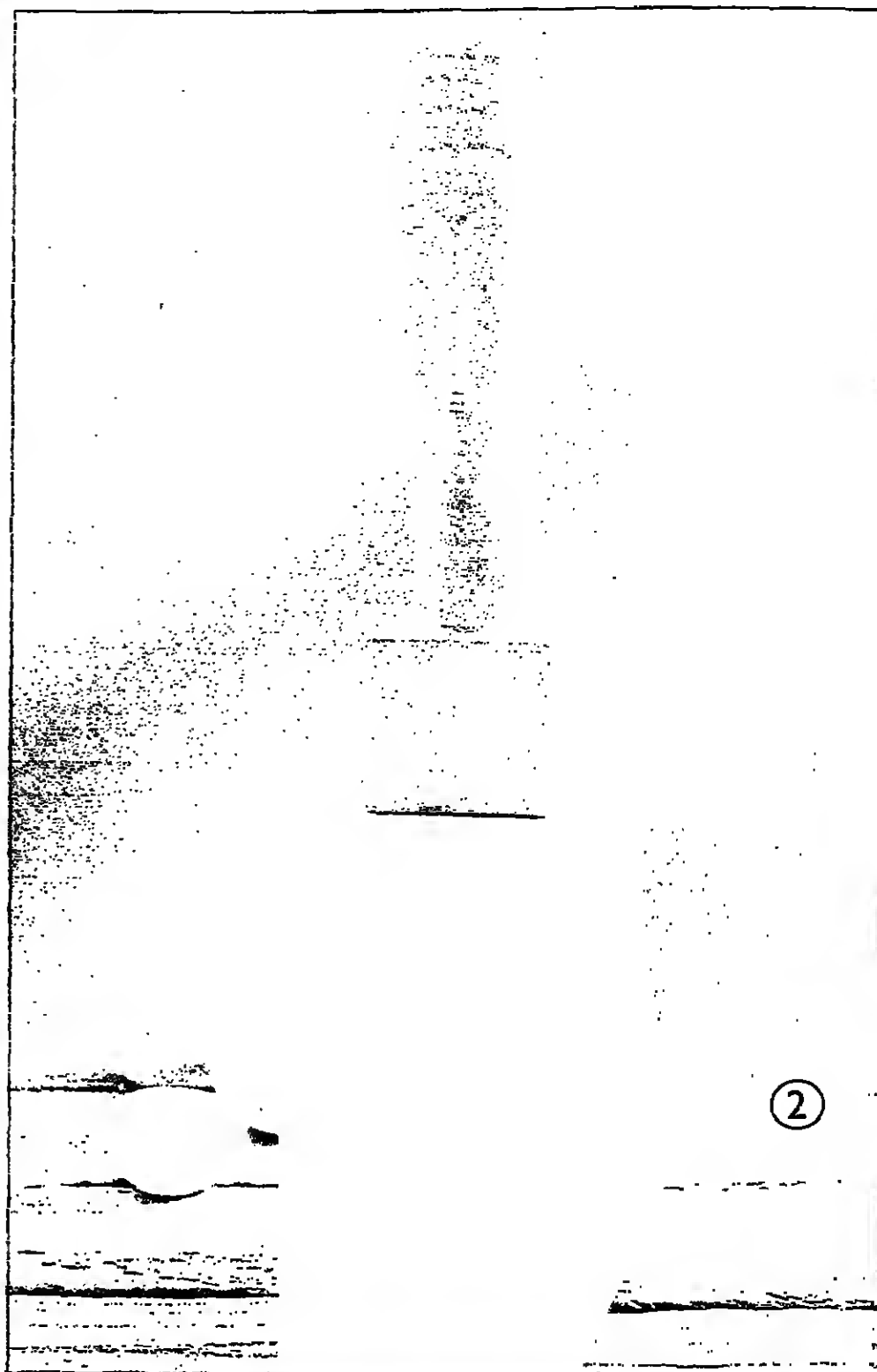
1 Head of Buddha. This reproduction of an original 5th-century Buddha head is part of the Victoria & Albert Museum's collection. Made of Durastone with a limestone finish, it is 15 inches tall. Available from the V&A shop, Cromwell Road, London SW7 2RL (0171-938 8434), and from John Lewis, House of Fraser and other leading department stores countrywide, at £83.

2 Modigliani head. Reproduction of one of a series of heads carved by Modigliani between 1910 and 1915. Made of reconstituted stone, it is just under 12 inches tall (excluding plinth). By mail-order from Art Room on their 24-hour catalogue and order line 01993

770444, stock no 21387, £115 plus £2.95 p&p; white plinth available separately for £24.95.

3 Male torso

Cast from a first or second century AD Roman sculpture on display in the British Museum in London, the torso of a reclining man is thought to be that of Herakles. Made of plaster with a protective finish (C61080) or in a patinated "antiqued" version (C66180), 12 inches long. Available to order from British Museum Customer Services department, 0171-323 1234; allow eight weeks for delivery. £120 and £140 (antiqued). Limited stocks at the museum shops at Great Russell St, London WC1 and Terminal 4, Heathrow airport (0181-554 7720).



4 Arlington dog. Taken from a marble statue at Arlington, Cheshire, now owned by the National Trust, thought to be of a terrier that pined away after the death of its master Sir Bruce Chichester in the late 18th century.

Made of high-density plaster, hand-finished, with a smoky brown wash. Also in black from NT town shops only. Eight inches long. Available from the National Trust mail-order department on 01225 790800, stock no 49500, £16.99 plus £3.50 p&p.

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To have and to hold

Gina Cowen talks to Joanna Still about her path to the potters' wheel and the forms it has taken

Afternoon tea in Wiltshire at the home of potter Joanna Still is about as fine as the taking of tea can be: large warm kitchen set against a cold Easter weekend, the Aga surrounded by a wall of postcards like a mini-museum; delicious home-made lemon cake sitting plump upon a hand-made Still plate, glowing with rich blues, greens, terracottas, golds; tea poured from an ochre-green, salt-glazed pot (an early work of hers).

Out at the back through a steeply rising garden is the studio in a converted stable. There's a workspace below with wheel, kiln, clay, paints, glazes; and a showroom above. Your eye is immediately caught by a large and perfect jug – a model of pulchritude and practicality. On the wall is a huge poster from the recent exhibition London's Hayward Gallery, "Objects of Desire". It shows Picasso's *Plucher with apples* (1919) – one of the apples sitting on a magnificent bold-spouted jug. A strong feature of Still's jugs is their unashamed spouts, making them not only objects of desire but objects of good function. Not here the kind of jug that dribbles its contents anywhere but into the required container.

Not surprisingly her first love was shape (she is also

married to the sculptor Tim Harrison). "When I started I did not paint at all, I was much more interested in form." Her self quite impressive in form, tall and striking with strong expressive hands, Still started what has now been a 20-year voyage in ceramics having explored several other forms of work – linguist, secretary, fisherman, even highly successful restaurateur in Alaska. It was while working back in London at the Royal Institute of International Affairs that she



attended evening classes in pottery at the Addington Institute and suddenly "just knew that this was what I wanted to do". She decided to apply to Harrow School of Art (whose Studio Pottery course had such tutors as Michael Casson, Walter Keeler, Richard Slee and Mo Jupp). For the interview, she took the first pot she had ever thrown. "Actually, it broke in my bicycle basket and I had to stick it together." None the less she was accepted and completed a two-year course before setting up a studio at Ansty in Wiltshire.

In the early years Still pro-

duced functional salt-glazed stone ware, with forms inspired by the sturdy shapes of early English pottery. Now at her present studio in the Wiltshire village of Hindon, Still has gradually developed a more decorative approach, combining a growing interest in painting with that of form. A strong influence has been Minoan ware from Crete, with its bold vitality and flowing designs.

"There's a relationship between the throwing of a pot and the painting, in terms of the time and energy spent on it," she says. "You shape the form out of the clay in minutes on the wheel, it rises up almost in a single movement. The painting should be free flowing in the same way: formed swiftly with fluid strokes as energetic and spontaneous as the throwing." Still now works in red earthenware clay which is dipped in a cream slip then painted with oxides (and sometimes etched back through to the base colour in a technique known as "graffiti"). After the first firing the colours are soft pastels. Then a final glaze (the kiln heating to over 1000 degrees centigrade) brings the colours into the rich hues of earth, sun, sky, sea, fire. Her decorations and motifs are inspired by nature: willow slim leaves brown on green, green on pale gold, waves of blue, a motif of falling feathers dotted with dust red.

A close friend is Georgina von Etzdorf whose workshop is just down the road and with whom Still has travelled to India over the last four years for research and inspiration. There is a similarity in the luminous

designs of von Etzdorf's fabrics and those Still paints on her ceramics. Both have an unerring eye for colour and line, though Still's fabric is, of course, solid clay. In her eminently functional

ware, the form is never obscured by the design it wears. It is always clear that these are objects to be used, not just admired.

Joanna Still's dinner plates, side

plates, milk jugs and water jugs start at around £15 and go up to £100. For commissions and stockists call 01747 820478; Joanna Still, 4 Beckford Cottages, Hindon, Salisbury, Wiltshire SP5 6ED

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How to keep running fast – nod the Radcliffe and Zatopek way



MIKE ROWBOTTOM
ON UNUSUAL
MODES OF
SPEEDING UP

THE sinuous, snow-lined route around Balmoral Castle last weekend offered those present, either in person or televisually, an extended opportunity to appreciate a sporting phenomenon: the Paula Radcliffe running action.

Within the first of her five scheduled miles, the 24-year-old from Bedford was out on her own, with a field including two of Scotland's most revered athletes, Yvonne Murray and Liz McColgan, in her wake.

When Radcliffe gets into her stride, she nods. Not constantly, but regularly. It is as if she is affirming her own progress.

In winning the world junior cross country championships six years ago.

But what I failed to realise until Saturday's race was that when she wants to go faster, she doesn't merely lengthen her stride as other athletes might. Instead, it is as if she becomes speeded-up film – arms, legs, and, of course, nodding head all increase in tempo. It's like watching a rowing eight up their stroke rate.

Another thing she does: when at cruising speed, she rolls her eyes. Altogether it is a curious style, a style which, at first glance, suggests the danger of imminent collapse.

Fifty years ago, the oddities of Emil Zatopek's modus operandi provoked similar concerns.

As he made his way round the tracks and roads of Europe, head lolling, face excruciated, he too appeared permanently on the brink of black-out.

Yet appearances proved – permanently – deceptive. Never more so than during the 1952 Olympic marathon in Helsinki, when Zatopek laboured to catch up with Britain's Jim Peters, who was setting a bold, if not rash, early pace. "Is the pace too fast?" Zatopek enquired. "No," Peters replied hopefully. "Too slow." But it was he who subsequently blew a gasket as the Czechoslovakian went on to win.

Generations of athletics coaches have striven to optimise – and standardise – the technique of their charges.

Their work, more often than not, has proved effective.

Linford Christie was never what you might call easy in his relations with the press, but whenever anyone managed to get him talking about his sprinting technique, his confrontational tendencies vanished.

He always acknowledged the work his coach, Ron Roddan, had put in to transform him from a promising novice – whose nickname, "Horse", we must presume to have been a reference to his galloping action – into an Olympic champion.

The golden rules regarding knee lift, hip elevation and running through the line were absorbed and are now being passed on to a younger generation of British runners.

And yet golden rules do not always apply. More than once, I have heard knowledgeable observers of athletics mutter to each other during races involving Radcliffe that if only she could stop nodding, she would gain five, ten, fifteen seconds. It does appear to be wasted energy. But who can say for sure what improvement there would be, even if she could learn to resist this natural temptation?

There is a story on the athletics circuit of a runner whose unorthodox arm action was painstakingly corrected in an effort to optimise their performance, and who subsequently became injured. The arm action turned out to have been a natural corrective to a misalignment of the hip.

That instance may be apocryphal, but it has the ring of truth. Besides, there is another advantage to be gained by those of the Agonised School of Running, namely appreciation.

When one watches one of that pained number, the effort is so patent that it automatically engages one's support. The smooth stylings of this world – the Seb Coes, the Wilson Kipketer – have always appeared capable of looking after themselves. You admire, you marvel. But your active assistance does not appear to be required.

However, when you watch Radcliffe striving for medals you find yourself willing her on, silently urging her to write the last reserves from her – apparently – draining energy. On one occasion, at last year's

World Championships in Athens, I even found myself nodding.

There is, of course, a case for saying that all this sympathy is misplaced. Radcliffe made it eloquently last weekend.

A few moments after making her way across the line at Balmoral – a world record and McColgan half a minute behind – she paused to regain her breath as well wishers gathered around her. It must have been fully five seconds before she recovered, signed an autograph and moved serenely across to the BBC commentary position to give her considered view of the race, the course and her future plans. As she did so, her interviewer began nodding, vigorously.

Hendry and Davis looking for peerless performances

SIX is a number that resonates in snooker. Ray Reardon is a six-time world champion, so are Steve Davis and Stephen Hendry. Getting there is hard enough, but so far in the modern game the seventh wonder has proved impossible.

Which will provide the principal plot at this year's Embassy World Championship, starting at the Crucible this morning. Hendry or Davis could both become peerless in Sheffield over the next 17 days. Alternatively

Two snooker legends aim to become the seventh wonder of the World Championships, which start today. Guy Hodgson reports

ly they could remain bracketed one short of an absolute majority, as the former was in the final last year.

Hendry's 18-12 defeat by Ken Doherty last May stopped a run of five successive titles for the Scot whose main motive for remaining in a sport he has dominated in the 1990s is to become the greatest player

numerically as well as by reputation.

All season he has been saying "I'll be very disappointed if I don't get the seventh title this year," but that was before he saw his draw. If some devious mind had conjured a plot to halt Hendry on six, then he would have had to go some to improve on how the £1.3m tournament has panned out.

In the first round he meets Jimmy White, with whom he contested four finals between 1990 and 1994, and if the seedings prevail he will then have to play Darren Morgan, who was one missed blue away from being 11-11 with him in last season's quarter-final, Ronnie O'Sullivan, John Higgins and Doherty. The latter three are respectively, third, second and fourth in the world rankings.

"A minefield" is how Higgins describes it, but as Hendry has won the world title with a broken arm before he is the man most likely to find a path through it. "The draw doesn't bother me," he said. "The first round against Jimmy is what I'm thinking about."

"It's just about the toughest I could have got, but by the same token it'll be so hyped I'll be up for it. The atmosphere will be superb. This is the first time for five years I haven't played on the first Saturday. I think I'll be more relaxed."

It was also very nearly the first time in 12 years that he arrived at the Crucible without a win, but he broke 11 fruitless months at the Thailand Mas-

ters and on Sunday was only just pipped by Higgins in the final of the British Open in Plymouth. His form, so wretched at the start of the season his manager Ian Doyle questioned his cue action, is looking ominously good.

"You have doubts, you're only human," he said. "To go so long without a title when, for years I've been winning five, six tournaments was bound to create doubts. Thailand was important. It proved I could still win. It would have been disappointing to have got to Sheffield without something from the season."

Even so, Hendry has lost six of the last seven finals he has contested, which suggests he no longer sails as close to snooker perfection as he used to and in turn gives hope to the jackals behind him. Higgins more than anyone, Sunday's win was his third of the season and, after falling in the quarter-finals in the last two years, he feels at 22 he is experienced enough to do better.

"The last couple of times I've gone there more in hope, really," he said, "trying to do my best. Now I'm old enough to cope. Last year my head wasn't really right. I was chopping bits off my cue and although I said I was OK I wasn't."

Neither was O'Sullivan (despite a 147 maximum completed in a record 5min 20sec) although there is evidence other than his trimmed down 12 stone frame that he also will arrive in Sheffield in prime form.

He has won four titles this season and, when he defeated Hendry in the final of the UK Championship in November, it was one of four consecutive wins over the world No 1.

If the bottom half of the draw is loaded, then the top is relatively benign which will encourage Doherty, who would surpass both Hendry and Davis if he followed his first world title with a second at the next opportunity.

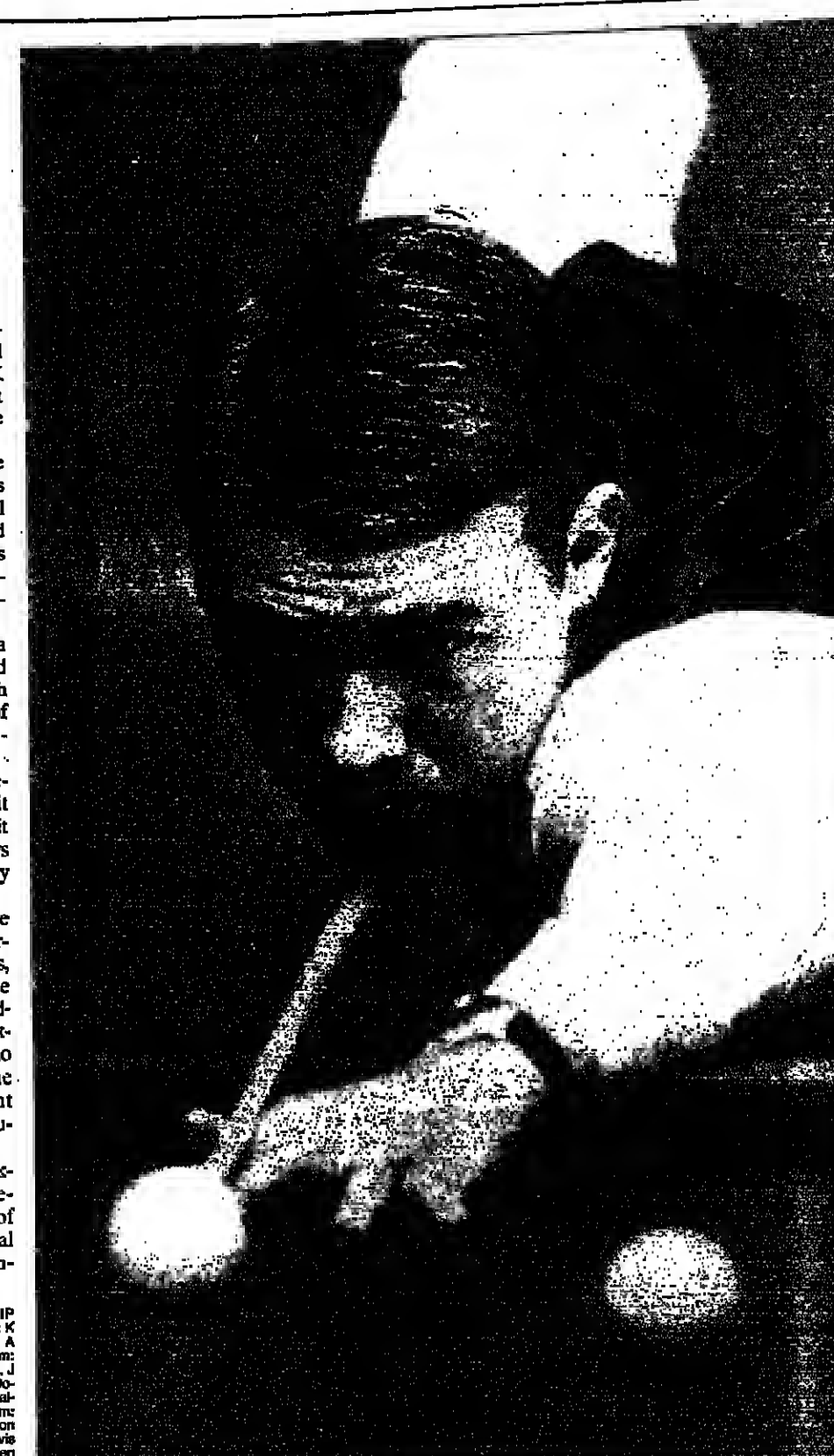
The Irishman suffered a reaction to becoming world champion last year, although his form in the second half of the season is markedly improved on the first.

"People say it's hard to defend the title," he said, "but it can't be as hard as winning it for the first time. That's always the hardest thing. Why shouldn't I do it again?"

Doherty starts against Lee Walker, who reached the quarter-finals last year, while Davis, at 40 the oldest player in the tournament, meets Simon Bedford, who at 215 is the least experienced professional to qualify, having won nine matches at three different venues just to get to the Crucible.

Davis's chance of overtaking Hendry and Reardon is reflected in a bookies price of 25-1, although his potential draw is by no means as arduous as it could have been.

EMBASSY WORLD CHAMPIONSHIP (Sheffield) First round: Today: 10am: K Doherty (Rep of Ir) v L Walker (Wst), A Hamilton (Eng) v D Harold (Eng), 8.30pm: J Williams (Wst) v F O'Brien (Rep of Ir), J Higgins (Scot) v J Ferganese (Eng), 7pm: Doherty v Walker to conclusion, 1.30pm: (Wst) v A Burden (Eng) Tomorrow: 10am: Williams v O'Brien to conclusion, Hamilton v Harold to conclusion, 2.30pm: S Davis (Eng) v A Bedford (Eng), Drago v Burden to conclusion, 7pm: M Williams (Wst) v O O'Sullivan



Stephen Hendry: Aiming for snooker history in Sheffield

Photograph: PA

Henman suffers Tokyo blow

JAN-MICHAEL GAMBILL, blasting two-handed returns from both sides, knocked out British No 2 Tim Henman, the last of the top seeds, from the Japan Open yesterday, beating the No 3 seed, 6-3, 4-0, 6-3 in the quarter-finals.

Gambill, now up to 81 in the world rankings from 176 at the end of last year, broke Henman three times in the final set. He capped the last break and the match with a two-handed forehand down the line that Henman could not handle with a stabbing backhand volley.

The top seed, Patrick Rafter, and the No 2, Michael Chang, had been beaten in the two previous rounds, leaving Byron Black of Zimbabwe, the No 10, and No 11, Gambill, as the highest surviving seeds.

With the tournament hit by rain for the third time in five days, all matches were being played under the closed roof of the Ariake Coliseum.

Gambill moved up in the rankings after the Indian Wells tournament last month, when he beat three top 50 players – Mark Philippoussis, Jim Courier and Andre Agassi. He lost in the semi-finals to Marcelo Rios, the new world No 1.

A disappointed Henman said: "I don't think really either of us played particularly well. There were times when I played better, but my problem was I didn't execute the shots that I had to."

● Marcelo Rios' injured left elbow is more serious than originally thought and may keep him away from the court for several months. His father said yesterday, Rios Jr is in Miami and his father, Jorge, said he was undergoing a new battery of tests yesterday, but participation in the Monte Carlo Open, which starts on Monday and where he is the defending champion, was unlikely.

Chester coach Burton makes way for Peers

By Richard Taylor

MIKE BURTON resigned as head coach of the Chester Jets yesterday after watching his team suffer through a disappointing, injury-hit campaign. Burton, last season's Budweiser League play-off in two week's time.

Burton, last season's Budweiser League play-off in two week's time, is swapping places with assistant coach and former England player Robbie Peers, who guided Chester to three wins in Burton's absence this season.

Instead of making their Wembley reservations, Greater London Leopards and Birmingham Bulls have been dragged into an extra weekend's league before the Budweiser League play-off in two week's time.

League champions Leopards and runners-up Bulls thought the hard work was behind them after away victories over Manchester Giants and Derby Storm, but midweek defeats have taken both sides into tomorrow's decisive third round.

Newcastle Eagles, beaten at London Towers last weekend, made home advantage count with a 73-50 win on Tuesday and also need tomorrow's third

game to take their place in the finals alongside Thames Valley Tigers, who beat Sheffield Sharks 2-0.

Leopards lost their chance of an easy road to Wembley at free throw line on Thursday, where they missed 13 out of 27 shots as Brett Larrick's eight from 11 three-pointers blasted Giants to a 107-98 victory.

The Leopards' coach Billy Mims said "We were only five points down with 40 seconds to play, but when you've thrown away 13 free throws I don't know if you deserve to win."

"We know Larrick is a great shooter but we left him so wide open for some of his shots I could have made them."

QUOTES OF THE WEEK

● Maybe people will recognise me now as Mark O'Meara, the Masters champion. O'Meara, tired of being mistaken for Mark McCumber and Tom Lehman.

● When I got on the first tee and saw the look in Jack's eyes, I could see I was in for something special. Ernie Els on partnering Jack Nicklaus in the final round of the Masters.

● When you get an opportunity like I had today and don't take it you feel you have let yourself down. Jack Nicklaus, after a final round of 68 left the 58-year-old in joint sixth place in the Masters.

● He doesn't care about being kicked or punched or shoved. He's a warrior and he's never let me down. Gianluca Vialli, on Mark Hughes, whose goal put the Italian player-manager's Chelsea side in the European Cup-Winners' Cup final.

● If my team shows as much determination, then we'll get there. Alex Ferguson, hoping Manchester United's Premiership title chase will end as happily for him as his horse Queensland Star's winning first race at Newmarket.

Hamed still has to convince

Boxing
By Glyn Leach

NASEEM HAMED, the World Boxing Organisation featherweight champion and headline attraction of Frank Warren's extravagant multi-title fight promotion at the Nynes Arena, Manchester, this evening, should be returning to the British ring as a conquering hero. But, following December's up-and-down four-round win over Kevin Kelley in New York, Hamed has some convincing to do against the veteran Puerto Rican, Wilfredo Vazquez.

Hamed's American debut was thrilling for viewers of the US TV network Home Box Office, which is paying him \$12m (£7.3m) for six fights. But it underlined, categorically, that at the level Hamed has now reached, sloppiness will be punished. And Hamed has appeared to become more lax rather than more clinically lethal as the ante has upped. Watching his recent performances has been akin to watching a man with everything to live for play Russian roulette.

For all his flash, Hamed is the product of a stable Muslim background. But the 24-year-old, who has earned in excess of £10m, seems caught up in the whirlwind that his career has become and may need to take a step outside his situation in order to effectively evaluate recent

events. If he does not do so willingly, then self-analysis and soul-searching will be forced upon Hamed by inevitable defeat.

It is easy to comprehend how one whose elaborate ring walk tonight is scheduled to begin 15 minutes before the fight might feel the need to win dramatically – a dull, 12-round win on points hardly embellishes a pyrotechnic entrance too crass even for the rock band Kiss. Hamed, undefeated in 29 fights (27 KOs), has won his last 17 fights, dating back to May 1994, by stoppage and is proud of the fact.

But as an amateur, the Yorkshire southpaw of Yemeni descent was more boxer than brawler, stopping only 18 opponents in over 60 wins. Some of that youthful circumspection would not go amiss for the champion, who tonight makes his ninth title defence.

The challenger Vazquez, 36, has come for the money. The former three-time world champion gave up his World Boxing Association title, for which he was due to receive only around \$100,000 to defend against the mandatory challenger Antonio Cermeno, in favour of a sum around three times greater.

But despite his 60-fight experience (50 wins, seven defeats, three draws), Vazquez will have to earn his money the hard way. With 37 KOs to his name, the Puerto Rican can punch, particularly on the counter, but he

looks too shop-worn to dethrone Hamed, even a technically negligent version. Hamed predicts this will end in the second and it should do, but Russian roulette's a funny old game.

The local limelight-shirker, Carl Thompson's WBO cruiserweight title defence against the former WBO middleweight and super-middleweight champion Chris Eubank is a marriage of convenience. Thompson, 33, was unhappy at the purses being offered him for less famous opposition, while the 31-year-old Eubank, whose last fight was at 12 stone, steps up two weight categories to challenge for a world title after losing his last three fights at that level.

Eubank claims his "walking around" weight, has long been close to the 13st 8lb cruiserweight limit, but he will concede height, range and natural strength to a blue-collar champion (22-4, with 16 KOs) who shuns public attention as much as Eubank seeks it.

Weight is one thing, but power is another entirely and, on that crucial level, it is inconceivable that Eubank can be Thompson's equal. Eubank has trained longer and harder than for any fight since his momentous war with Nigel Benn in November 1990, but that seems unlikely to be enough. Tough and brave for all his foppiness, Eubank has never been stopped in 50 fights (45 wins, three de-

feats and two draws), but there would be no disgrace in his seeking an exit should the going get too tough tonight.

The WBO has seriously compromised itself, and the organisation's two-time heavyweight champion, Herbie Hide, by sanctioning the title challenge of the plainly unworthy Damon Reed. A journeyman cruiserweight from the Dustbowl circuit in the American mid-west, Reed, 26, has cannon fodder written all over him and admits to being terrified of the near-16 stone Hide, whom Reed alone views as a "giant heavyweight".

Norfolk's Hide, 26, himself a former cruiserweight, has talent aplenty but he has become a problem to match. Fast and hard-hitting, Hide is a dangerous proposition for all but the top heavyweights. But after a 10-month lay-off since regaining the title against veteran Tony Tucker, after which Hide suffered the trauma of his younger brother Alan's death from leukaemia, it is perhaps wise that a fighter viewed as psychologically erratic will not be severely tested here.

Reed, however, is taking things to extremes. The American has lost only one of 26 fights, but has only beaten "stiffs". It is rumoured that Hide, orthodox in stance if not style, aims to record his 30th win (28 by KO at present) by fighting as a southpaw. Reed's challenge could hardly be better defined.



New order down at Vicarage Road

Tomorrow's 20,000 sell-out match between Saracens and Newcastle is a watershed in English club rugby, says Chris Hewett

BIG, bigger, biggest. A sell-out crowd of 20,000 will sardine their way into Vicarage Road for tomorrow's irresistible rumble between Saracens and Newcastle and if the record-breaking audience marks a new summit in the fortunes of both clubs - when Michael Lynagh first pitched up at Sarries two years ago, he was in serious danger of mistaking their Southgate clubhouse for the groundsman's hut - it is also a watershed occasion for English domestic rugby. The old Bath-Leicester plutocracy is dead and buried. Here comes everybody.

As recently as last Christmas, anyone found publicly peddling the possibility of a 15,000-plus crowd for an Allied Dunbar Premiership game featuring neither of the two traditional warhorses would have been dismissed as a screwball or given a seat on the Rugby Football Union's management board, which amounts to the same thing. The sight of Wasps, the reigning champions, struggling to attract a quorum of supporters to Loftus Road for perfectly marketable Heineken Cup matches reinforced the ancient regime in its view that free-spending club investors were flirting dangerously with the economics of the madhouse.

But the last three months or so have witnessed a sea change in the public perception of Premiership rugby - and not only in the union strongholds of the West Country and the East Midlands, either. Newcastle, a team gasping for the oxygen of exposure in a city where football is not only God but the Son and the Holy Ghost as well, crammed 8,000 souls into their 5,000-capacity Kingston Park venue for the game with Saracens last month and they will relocate to the much larger Gateshead stadium for the forthcoming visits of Bath and Leicester. Business is booming with a capital BOOM.

"We're starting to become a focal point for the north-east and while most of us can still safely embark on a shopping trip without having to sign a thousand autographs, we're definitely beginning to feel part of what is a fantastic sporting community," said



Michael Lynagh (left) and Rob Andrew, the rival outside-halves, will be involved in the last skirmish of a compelling personal conflict



Photographs Peter Cook David Hewison

Two sporting revolutions: How they compare

The "Hard Yards" factor
Newcastle may have earned themselves a reputation as the Premier-ship's strong-arm bully brigade, but Saracens have a clear edge in the "hard yards" and grind areas. Roberto Grau and Paul Wallace are scrumming more effectively than Nick Poppo and Paul Van Zandvoort, and while Doreen Wells' insatiable appetite for big-time rugby continues to underline his status as the most effective all-round lock in European rugby, Gareth Archer's drop in form gives the Londoners parity at the line-out, especially as they can call on Tony Diprose's athleticism in the last-quarter role.

The "Flash Harry" factor
The Saracens back division has a more cosmopolitan feel to it than Carlos Santarén's percussion section, but for all its southern hemisphere influence - not to mention a certain Philippe Sella - it does not quite stack up against Newcastle's muscular finishing machine. The Naylor-Underwood combination gives the Falcons contrasting potency on the wings and they possess a sheet iron midfield, thanks to Tait and Tuigamala's streetwise operation of a defensive strategy straight out of rugby league. Any side able to marginalise a talent of Tim Strippson magnitude must be useful.

The "Mastermind" factor
Andrew and Lynagh, Lynagh and Andrew. The rival outside-halves were born 10 months apart in 1963 and have been doppelganging each other ever since. Lynagh place-kicking Andrew to defeat in the 1991 World Cup final, Andrew drop-goaling Lynagh into Test retirement in the last eight of the 1995 tournament. And still, there is barely a fag paper between them. Andrew plays the more physical game, Lynagh the more fluid, but in the big-money areas of goal-kicking and tactical awareness, they remain superglued together. The last skirmish in a compelling personal conflict.

The "Moneybags" factor
Take two deadbeat clubs in two unfashionable rugby areas, throw in two mighty wallets and what do you get? Two sporting revolutions. Sir John Hall and Nigel Wray have matched each other cheque for cheque and their dynamism has left Cliff Brittle, the Rugby Football Union chairman, looking like a cross between King Canute and Tyrannosaurus Rex - or, in his case, tyrant-osaurus rex. Again, the Andrew-Lynagh link is central; Hall's reinvention of Newcastle began with his recruitment of England's golden boy while Wray set things rolling by sweet-talking the Australian equivalent.

The "Desire" factor
Newcastle have triumphed by a single score at Bath, Leicester, Northampton and Gloucester this season and in the context of English club rugby, there can be no more persuasive evidence of their psychological durability. When the Falcons go to war, the backward step is not an option. Until recently, their rivals' mindset seemed fragile by comparison, but François Pienaar has now imposed his death or glory Springbok ethic on the Londoners' dressing room. Given the choice of meeting either Pienaar or Dean Ryan on a rugby field, it might be easier to emigrate.

Twickenham in three weeks' time. The reality is very different, however. "The Premiership will be gone if we lose tomorrow and while we would still have the cup to play for, we would be in the testing position of having to win it from a low point in terms of morale," pointed out the Saracens captain, Tony Diprose, whose direct rivalry with Ryan will again be spiced by their private tug-of-war over the England No 8 shirt. "If we win, we will still need another team to do us a favour. But the more anxious we can leave Newcastle feeling about their final four games, the better. It will be close, just like last time."

Newcastle's 30-25 victory last month hardly made it onto the charge sheet under the "daylight robbery" heading - after all, they outscored Saracens by three tries to one - but they made only sporadic sorties behind enemy lines that night and similar territorial deficiencies at Gloucester last Saturday indicated that their one-paced pack might be running out of four-star. "We didn't see the ball for the best part of 40 minutes at Kingsholm," Ryan admitted. "But we still squeezed the result by taking the few opportunities that came our way and if we're equally clinical tomorrow, we'll give ourselves some elbow room. Rather than have Sarries scrapping us all the way to the last day of the season."

Saracens will start the contest with the same 15 who proved too strong and, dare we say it, too cultured for Bath at the Recreation Ground on Good Friday. That means another start for Ben Sturman alongside Diprose and François Pienaar in a beautifully balanced back row and if the formidable powerful newcomer leaves his calling card on a few Gordie ribcages, he may well find himself accompanying England on this summer's tour of Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

Newcastle, meanwhile, will delay naming their side for as long as possible: aches, pains and muscle strains affecting Rob Andrew, Va'auga Tuigamala and Stuart Legg, among others, have left the publishers of tomorrow's match programme stranded in the land of supposition. Tuigamala, who "copped a call" in the opening five minutes of the Gloucester match but stayed on until the bitter end, is the most serious doubt and there is a strong possibility that Jonny Wilkinson, the youngest England cap in acon, will see his learning curve take another sharp deflection towards the vertical.

Cornishmen beef up county show

A SIGN of the times? The Twickenham vicinity plays host to three contrasting games this afternoon - the Harlequins-Leicester Premiership match, the Women's Cup final featuring Saracens and Wasps and the County Championship decider between Cheshire and Cornwall - and two of them have attracted live television coverage, writes Chris Hewett.

Interestingly enough, given the views of some of the Rugby Football Union's more outspoken power-brokers, the county showpiece is the odd one out.

It is entirely understandable that the Sky Sports program-

mers should keep their eggs in the Premiership basket; the Quins match may not have a bearing on the destination of the Allied Dunbar title, but the mere presence at The Stoop of Zinzin Brooke and Dean Richards, the rival coaches, will allow the talking heads to jaw themselves to distraction. But the broadcasters' enthusiasm for the women's match puts the decline of county rugby into stark relief.

So too does the fact that Cheshire, champions in 1950 and 1961, will be cheered on - or, rather, whimpered on - by fewer than 500 travelling supporters. County officials in the

North-west have been forced to cancel coach transport through lack of interest and even though 25,000 Cornishmen plan to undertake the traditional pilgrimage along the M3 and M4, Twickenham will almost certainly be less than half full. Indeed, were it not for the involvement of Cornwall, the last keepers of the county flame, the stadium would be less than a quarter full.

It is a far cry from the high days and holidays of the mid-1980s, when county rugby galvanised passions on a nationwide scale. Gloucestershire's comprehensive dismantling of Somerset in the 1984

final, played out before a record crowd, made such an impression on the England selectors that they took five of the victorious pack on the summer tour of South Africa. Today, Clive Woodward would have trouble recognising five of the 30 players on view.

Happily, another traditional foundation stone of British rugby, Pontypool RFC, may be on the road to recovery after a calamitous collapse in fortunes. A seven-man consortium led by Eddie Butler, the former Welsh No 8 and captain, will run "Pooler" from the end of this season following agreement with the club trustees.

Butler, who played alongside Terry Cochrane, Jeff Squire and the hallowed "Vet Gwent" in the great Pontypool side of the late 1970s and early 1980s before graduating to rugby journalism and broadcasting, has persuaded several local businessmen to throw their financial weight behind the takeover. Tony Simons, the club secretary, confirmed yesterday that all assets and liabilities had been signed over to the new group.

Pontypool were knock-out finalists as recently as 1991 but are now fighting a rearguard action against relegation from the Welsh First Division.

THE Welsh Rugby Union is to hold an inquest into Wales's dismal Five Nations Championship campaign. They finished third but suffered crushing defeats by England and the Grand Slam winners, France, which raised questions over the future of their coach, Kevin Bowring, with the World Cup only 18 months away.

Although Bowring, Wales' first full-time professional coach on a salary of about £50,000 a year, has a contract that will take him through to the finals in Welsh finals next year, there is increasing speculation about his future.

The WRU secretary, Dennis

Gethin, said yesterday: "The technical committee meet next week and will discuss the Five Nations campaign. That will then be considered by the general committee early next month."

Bowring's three-year spell has produced only four championships wins in 12 matches plus three defeats by Australia and one each by South Africa and New Zealand.

Welsh clubs are considering cutting their costs by accepting a ceiling on expenditure on their players.

"The figure will be based on 65 per cent of anticipated income from all sources," the WRU

chairman, Glamorgan Griffiths, said. "The principle of a salary cap has been accepted by the eight Premier Division clubs."

Cardiff's dispute with the Union over signing a 10-year loyalty agreement will now be heard in the High Court on 9 November.

● Bristol, bottom of the Allied Dunbar Premiership One, and Bristol Rovers, the Second Division football club, are to form a company to secure the future of the Memorial Ground. The ground will be sold to a new company called the Memorial Stadium Company for £2.3m, with the company jointly owned by Rovers and Bristol.

All we saw of the chubby drug cheat was a moving mountain of minders



CHRIS MAUME ON TV

BILL SHANKLY knew about foreigners. He believed that all Europeans were "thieves, rogues and vagabonds, living in the gutter." And when his Liverpool side and their fans travelled to the continent in the early days, according to supporter John Jones, "We were all war babies, and it felt like we were going to do a sortie."

Tommy Smith had the usual footballer's reaction to expeditions abroad: "It was four walls and a fellow telling you can't have coffee 'cause he hasn't got any." Nice to see that travel broadened the mind even back then. When Liverpool won the 1984 European Cup final in Rome, Bob Paisley remarked: "The last time I was in Rome I was in a 10-ton truck. We beat the Germans then and we beat them tonight."

Being teetotal, he was unable to celebrate in the traditional manner. "There are only two sober men in Rome tonight," he said, "me and the Pope."

All this was part of *Liverpool in Europe*, in Channel Four's Easter theme night on all things Scouse. As a Manchester United fan, I watched with mixed emotions: the grainy footage was evocative, and in the early days they won nothing, but it was painful to watch their transition under Paisley from a cavalier, attack-minded outfit to the canny operators who could kill a game off like seasoned assassins. Still, a 3-0 defeat to Internazionale was good to see, especially with one fan confessing to kicking the ref as he left the field.

If Tommy Smith was the archetype of the old-school

pro, Gary Lineker is virtually the template for the new breed, comfortable when surrounded by Johnny Foreigner, at home chatting with former presidents.

As England's only winner of the Golden Boot, which goes to the highest scorer in each World Cup final, Lineker was the obvious choice to front a new series on the history of the tournament. The first *Gary Lineker's Golden Boots* (BBC1) saw him in Argentina, talking to a survivor of the first final, in 1930, then whizzing ahead to 1978, when Mario Kempes won it for the generals.

It was surprising to see Lineker addressing the two controversial issues from that tournament - the bread-and-circus element, distracting attention from the oppression and torture,

and that notorious victory over Peru. After a round of golf, the former president, Carlos Menem, told Lineker that he experienced the 78 World Cup from inside a prison cell as a political prisoner, while Kempes said he felt no pressure from the regime.

"We had nothing to do with politics," he said, emitting the sportsman's mantra for when such questions arise. Yes you did, Mario. You just didn't realise it. Twenty years on, Kempes and the 78 captain, Daniel Passarella, were both indignant when asked about the 6-0 win over Peru that put Argentina into the next stage. "Only we know the sacrifices we had to make to win the World Cup," Passarella said, while, for Kempes, the conspiracy theorists "are insulting the whole nation."

The programme as a whole was a pleasant surprise for an old curmudgeon like me who resents Lineker for his anodyne charm. Unlike his work as an anchor-man, when he sometimes looks ill at ease, transfixed by the autocue, he looked at home. (He tried to get hold of Diego Maradona at some function or other, but all we saw of the chubby drug cheat was a moving mountain of minders carving past.) Matters were helped by a literate script from Stan Hely, who wrote *Smiler*, the series based on Lineker's Barcelona sojourn. I came to *Gary Lineker's Golden Boots* ready to deliver a critical Golden Kicking, but was frustrated by an intelligent, entertaining half-hour. Damn.

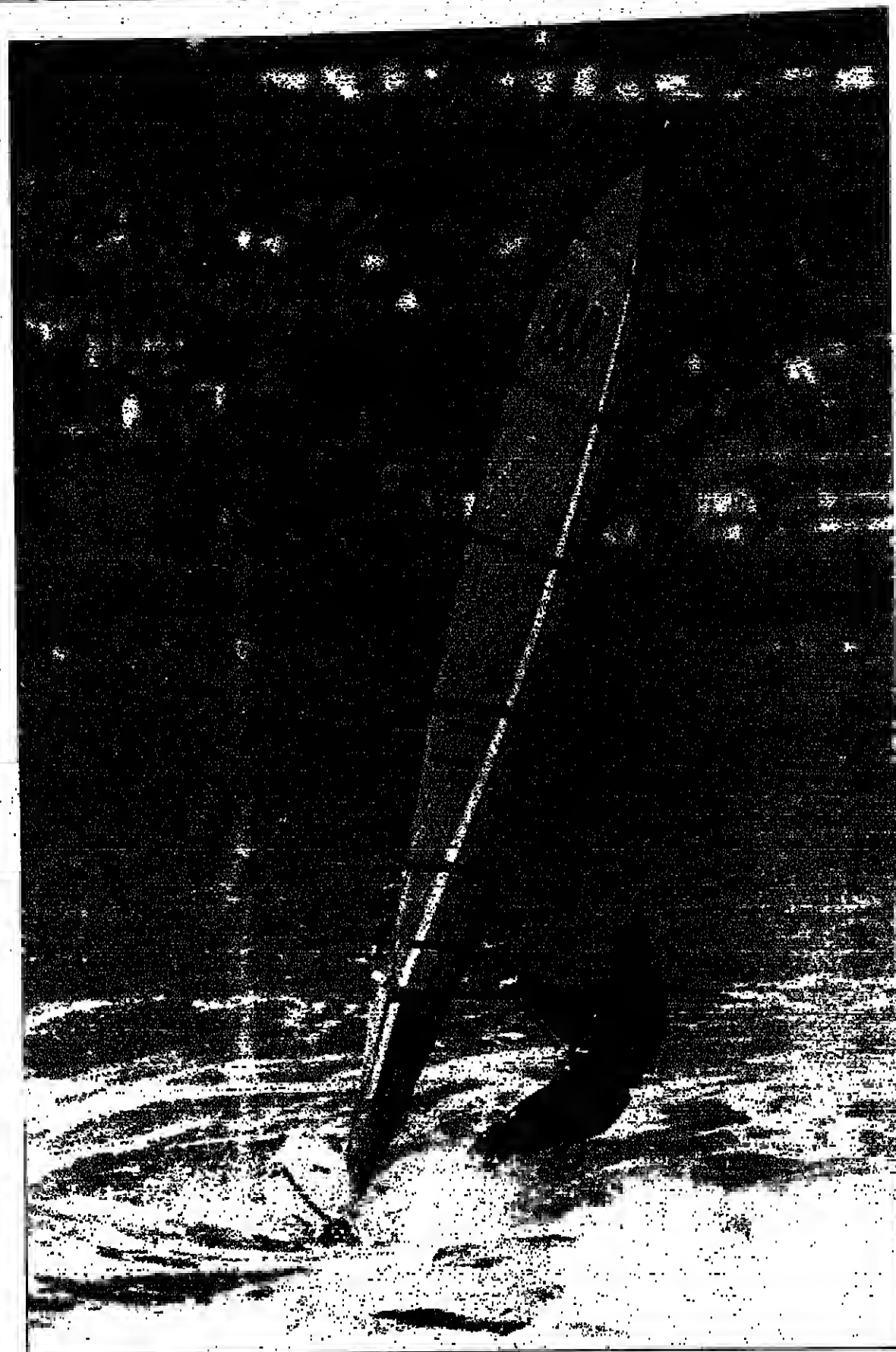
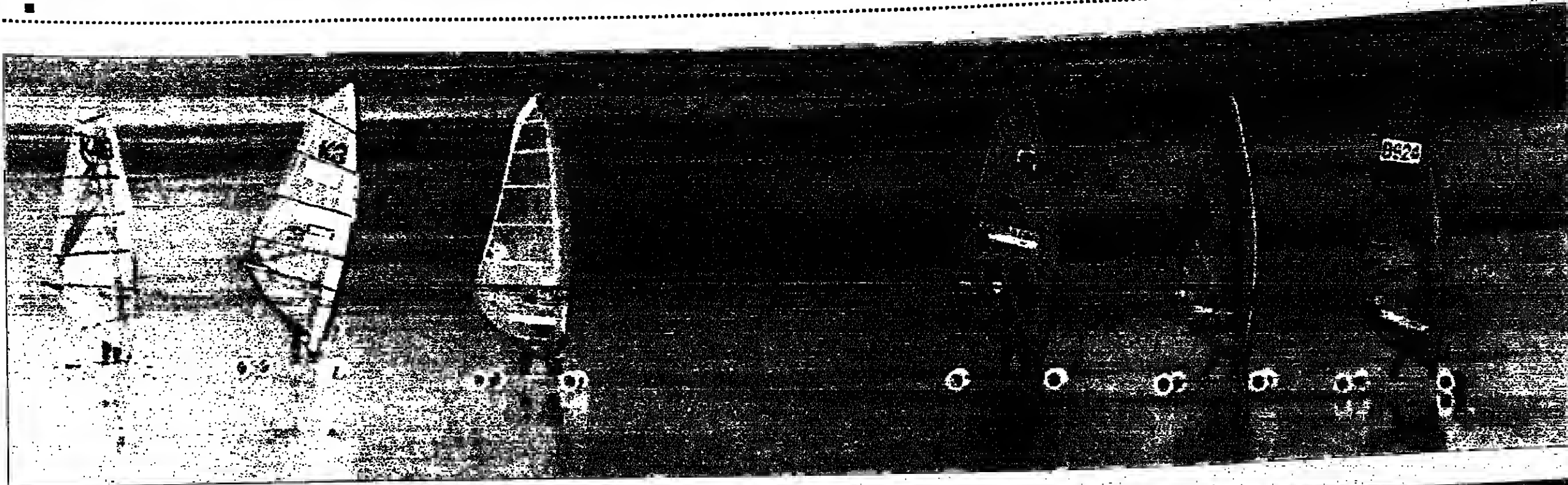
There was raw meat to be chewed up and spat out, though.

in *The Mission: Ice Cool In Japan* (BBC1), which followed the British bobsleigh team for the three months leading up to the Olympic Games. It was the cliché-ridden script that let the programme down most, while the narrator, Robert Lindsay, seemed to feel the need to lend an air of gravitas with his portentous delivery.

A big problem was that anyone who might have the remotest interest in watching a documentary about bobsleigh racing might just have noticed that there was a competition going in Nagano not so long ago, and that Our Brave Boys took home Britain's only medal. So the attempts to create suspense were futile and unnecessary.

The other caveat is that, as with wildlife films, we must sur-

vey be reaching the limit of how many fly-on-the-wall documentaries we can take. Even sticking to sport there's a surfeit, with the Lions film last week, a multi-part series on the Benetton Formula One team, the Bath rugby series last year and the recent Premier Passions - to name only the ones that come most immediately to mind. Perhaps to spare us some of it, they should combine the genres - Easter Monday's *Immigrants* documentary, for example, could have been shown instead of *Premier Passions*, which depicted Sunderland hurling themselves over the cliff into the Nationwide League. Or John Inverdale might be persuaded to go off and do a video diary in a particularly remote part of the Amazon. Now that *would* be a result.



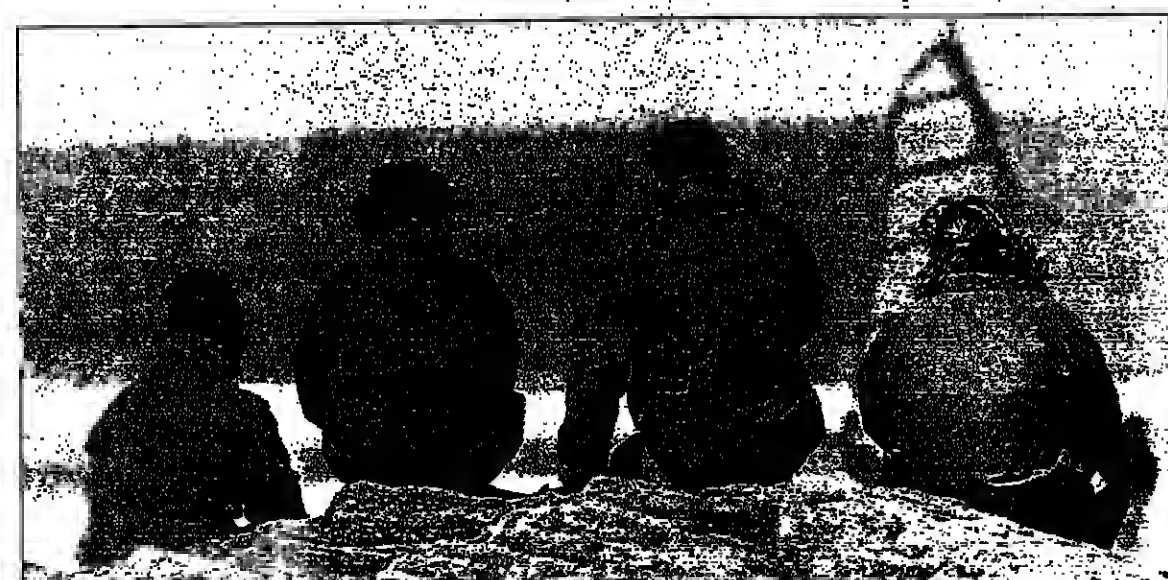
Power of the wind

THE weather may not have been ideal, but this week's rain and wind failed to dampen the enthusiasm of those taking part in the Renault Scenic International Sand and Surf Festival held on the beautiful Gwithian Beach in St Ives Bay, Cornwall. The event has been running all week and finishes tomorrow.

Among the competitors has been Lee Bartlett, Britain's three-times surfing champion, who is aiming to compete in the world championships in Portugal later this year.

Two of the main disciplines have been windsurfing and sand yachting, with the same sail used for both events. One of the highlights of the festival is a "surf triathlon", in which competitors speedsail, windsurf and finally surf, running between disciplines as they attempt to beat the clock.

PHOTOGRAPHS
BY
DAVID
ASHDOWN



Mrs Entwistle solves the sleeping arrangements



THE
GAFFER
TAPES

THANK Heaven for Mrs Entwistle. I don't know how England or myself would have managed without her. We could have even blown our World Cup chances. As it is we're back on track and, when Glenn's brave boys meet up tomorrow night, everyone should be sorted.

It all started when Glenn picked so many players in his squad - and insisted they all turn up. Don't get me wrong, I'm not one of those complaining managers - although it is unfortunate that Shaun Prone and Duane Spice, our only English qualified first-teamers, will both pull hamstring late in today's match. No, I'm right behind Glenn, he's a lot on his plate and it's no wonder he never thought to consider if the team hotel had enough rooms for 34 players - plus his coaching and support staff.

It hasn't. Honestly, the trouble it caused me, in my role as England Team Assistant, trying to arrange the

accommodation. It's hard enough anyway, at this stage of the season you have to be so careful.

Just imagine, Gary Neville gets up in the middle of the night to answer a call of nature, he trips over Ray Parlour's kit-bag, which has been left in the middle of the room, and sprains his ankle. Fergie would go potty, he'd be saying Arsène had put Parlour up to it. And what if Roy Lee went back to Newcastle saying that Darren Anderton's snoring had kept him awake for three nights and he was too tired to play at White Hart Lane next week. Even cheerful old Kenny might not see the funny side of that.

So Arsenal and Manchester United players must be kept apart, Spurs and Newcastle likewise. The Arsenal boys are a real problem. They obviously can't share with Spurs and the FA Cup final's too close to put them with Newcastle. Fortunately we can now put Tony Adams with Paul Merson,

there was a time when we had to put them at opposite ends of the hotel in case they were tempted to have a bit of a session.

Parlour's a bit of a "new man" as well now so we were going to put him in with Merse and Toney on a roll-away bed. As an uncapped player he's first choice for that sort of thing but we've had to abandon the idea. Glenn wants to be fair to everybody and that meant the other uncapped players also had to be on roll-aways. Not a problem with Dominic Matteo, he was in with Macca and Jamie, but Kevin Pressman on a roll-away bed? No, I didn't think so either. But John Gorman insisted so we gave it a go. Bad idea, the hotel manager was very good about it but there's still a bill on the way to the FA.

It's not just the players either. The masseur, the physio and the doctor need extra rooms to work in while Ellen, the faith healer, has to have the rooms above, below and to the

side left vacant so her work isn't affected by negative energy (if she means Ian Wright's ghetto blaster I can't say I blame her). Altogether we were six rooms short.

That's when I remembered Mrs Entwistle. She used to run some digs for me when I managed Blackfarm Rovers before she moved south and opened a guesthouse in Windsor. Well, the cold snap's deterred the tourists so she had enough spare rooms to look after the rest of the team. They're a lucky half-dozen, too, they'll get a full cooked breakfast, none that pory muesli and yogurt Glenn insists on.

Meanwhile, back at the Old Cornfield, we're suing the local press. They've carried a series of reports linking Leroy Ganya with Manchester United and it's beginning to affect his form. Now, I saw in a recent *World Soccer* that Dynamo Kiev successfully sued a Ukrainian paper for claiming Milan were after

Andrei Shevchenko. The club said this put pressure on a young player before very some important matches and sought damages. They won £129,000 so we're suing the *Sludgeharpe Advertiser* and *Sludge Times* for £1m each. That should put them out of business which serves them right, the *Advertiser* has been running a campaign against me for weeks while the *Times* carried a picture of me which showed my bald spot.

The Ukrainians apparently gave the money to charity. Obviously we'll look into doing the same... maybe.

It's been such a busy week with paperwork I've hardly been on the training pitch at all - not necessarily a bad thing when it's snowing. I did see Ivor Niggle bruise a rib sliding into the groundstaff's snowman, however, so he's out today. Shaun Prone starts, but, like Savo in front of goal, won't finish.

Barry Gaffer was talking to Glenn Moore.

SIDELINES

Graham hands referees a warning

NEVER one to hold back when venting his frustration on referees, the Leeds United manager, George Graham, was yesterday counselling them to keep their cool during what is certain to be a heated end to the season.

Graham fears the officials could deal a run band to those clubs with much at stake over the next few weeks. He experienced what he describes as "over-reaction" during last week's 2-0 defeat at relegation-threatened Everton.

Graham felt Uriah Rennie "lost the plot" during the first-half at Goodison Park - sending off Lucas Radebe and handing out five other bookings - which left the Sheffield referee with no leeway for the rest of the match.

Leeds, pushing for a UEFA Cup place, travel to an other side deep in trouble in Bolton today in what is just

one of a number of critical games as the season draws to an end.

He said: "Over the last few weeks of the season there are some very important matches for some teams, whether they are fighting for their lives, going for titles or trying to qualify for Europe."

"Referees are well aware of that and I would just ask them not to over-react because there's a lot at stake. I don't think the behaviour of the players is as bad as some referees anticipate."

"They think to themselves: 'We must take a tight grip on the game' and that's what happened to us at Everton last week. The referee [Rennie] anticipated a difficult game, but it was not the case. I think he over-reacted and now I hope it doesn't happen to us and other teams over these last few matches."

Comic book needs happy ending

Victory over Vicenza will take its place in Chelsea folklore. Mike Rowbottom reports.

FULHAM BROADWAY station erupted into song late on Thursday night as passengers on both platforms responded lustily to the urging of two fans brandishing a giant Chelsea scarf.

After seeing their team reach the European Cup-Winners' Cup final with a recovery that will take its place in Stamford Bridge folklore, the home supporters appeared ready to party all the way to the final in Stockholm on 13 May.

Chelsea's opponents there, VfB Stuttgart, had better beware of one thing - if they score early, they could be in trouble. It took the goal which put Vicenza 2-0 up on aggregate to concentrate Chelsea's collective mind. Their fitfulness is the one continuing concern of their player-manager Gianluca Vialli.

"The only problem we have got is that we can't play all the time at the same level," he said, after giving a truly inspirational performance which included the sublimely-directed cross which enabled his colleague Gianfranco Zola to level the aggregate scores.

Chelsea's problem is one which most other teams would love to have. Three finals - FA Cup, Coca-Cola Cup and European Cup-Winners' Cup - in the space of less than a year is testament to their exhilarating ability. But Vialli wants to amend that record to three cup victories.

"In Europe at the moment they think we are a good side," he said. "But the only way to be really respected is to win something, and it would dramatically change our image in Europe to win this competition."

Vialli was generous in his praise of Mark Hughes, whose goal six minutes after his arrival as a 70th-minute substitute put Chelsea in a position to further



Gianluca Vialli and Gianfranco Zola help Mark Hughes celebrate his storybook Cup-Winners' Cup semi-final winner

Photograph: David Ashdown

raise their European profile. At the age of 34, Hughes showed the same explosive sharpness in front of goal which he displayed in earning Manchester United the European Cup-Winners' Cup seven years earlier.

"I want to thank Mark," Vialli said. "He scored a great goal, and he's a warrior when he plays. He's never let me down."

The warrior could have been excused leaving the field of battle on a shield after being whacked senseless by an Italian elbow. "I didn't know who hit me but I've never been hit as hard in my life," Hughes said. "It was only the adrenalin which kept me going."

The angled volley with which Hughes finally killed off a hugely capable - and at times, hugely unlucky - Italian side was the kind of goal he has been scoring all his life. But this, he acknowledged, was one of the special ones.

"I've scored a few important goals in my career," he said. "Hopefully people will remember that one for a few years to come."

Vicenza's manager, Francesco Guidolin, will probably remember it to his dying day. While history - in the form of televised snippets - will reduce this match to one surging fight-back after an early setback, the

truth was that Chelsea lived dangerously at the back from the first minute to the last. And the visitors might easily have had three goals themselves had not fortune, or the burly home custodian Ed de Goey, taken a hand.

But such is Chelsea's potency going forward that - thus far in the competition at least - they have overcome such shortcomings. It is comic book stuff, and it deserves to be treasured.

"We touched the final with one hand, but not both," Guidolin reflected ruefully.

It was a disconsolate occasion for the Italians - apart, that is, from Vialli and the beaming

little figure of Zola, whose performance was hugely more impressive than that of the first leg.

On that occasion, he had been obliged to play a wide role. At Stamford Bridge, he flourished in a freer, more central position, upping the tie with a gloriously certain header.

Are you watching, Cesare Maldini? Zola was hopeful that the Italian manager was - and that he would also be watching the final.

So the District Line trains pulled out of Fulham Broadway on the night of Chelsea's glorious Comeback. "If you're all going to Stockholm, clap your hands," someone shouted.

Many voices responded again. Those dizzy days of 1971, when Osgood and Co took this trophy in Athens - they're back.

● The Premier League has turned down Chelsea's request to bring forward their last Premiership fixture of the season - a home match against Bolton - from Sunday 10 May to help preparations for the European Cup-Winners' Cup final.

The BBC has won the exclusive rights to screen the European Cup-Winners' Cup final between Chelsea and VfB Stuttgart next month, pipping Channel 5, which has followed the west London club since the first round of the tournament.

Shunned Harkes is left out in the cold

United States

THE national team coach, Steve Sampson, caused a major surprise this week when he announced that his team captain John Harkes, one of the most experienced American players, will not play in the World Cup finals in June.

Sampson told reporters he had dropped Harkes - a veteran of the 1990 and 1994 World Cups who has played 90 times for the United States - because of a combination of poor play and unspecified "leadership issues."

Sampson declined to go into details about the question of leadership from a player who has been the heart and soul of the US team for eight years and has led Washington DC United to two consecutive Major League Soccer titles.

"Out of respect for an individual who has performed so well [in the past] and contributed so much to US soccer, he deserves the right for our conversation to remain private," Sampson said. He added that, although Harkes had accepted Sampson's decision to play him in recent games at left-back rather than in midfield, he felt the player "did not embrace the decision."

"The national team must play as a unit and understand that," he said. Asked about Harkes' reaction when he told him he would not be going to France, Sampson said: "Enormous disappointment. But John realizes there are things in his game he needed to improve."

Harkes, who has extensive experience in the English game with Sheffield Wednesday and Derby County, said he hoped Sampson would reconsider.

"Ultimately, it is Steve Sampson's decision to make and I respect that," he said. "But I plan to prove to him that I belong on the team - but if he is

willing to keep an open mind and give me that chance."

Sampson, however, said it was "doubtful" he would change his mind and suggested Harkes' place is likely to be taken by Chad Deering, who has played only six times for the United States but is performing well in the German *Bundesliga* with Wolfsburg.

Another *Bundesliga* player who is in Sampson's plans is David Regis, a 29-year-old Martinique-born Frenchman who is married to an American woman and is a defender with Karlsruhe. "He has not received his citizenship," Sampson said. "but we are very hopeful that he will be available before we leave for France."

The 37-year-old Thomas Dooley, who grew up in Germany as the son of an American soldier he never knew, is likely to be the new captain.

Jamaica

DANNY MADDDX, the Queen's Park Rangers defender, has become the eighth English-born player to be called up to Jamaica's World Cup squad by the Brazilian-born coach, Rene Simoes. Maddix, who has Jamaican parents, is due to make his international debut this weekend in a four-nation tournament in Iran.

Ecuador

BARCELONA, not the Spanish club but a side from Ecuador's largest city, Guayaquil, lost their gate receipts from this week's Libertadores Cup tie against Chile's Colo Colo - when they were robbed by a gang of men wearing replica team shirts. The amount taken was not specified, but the crowd was 55,000.

53 days...until the start of the World Cup finals

ENGLAND may be facing Brazilian opposition in the first round of the finals. Tunisia, who take on Glenn Hoddle's men in Marseilles on 15 June, are ready to call up a Brazilian-born player, José Clayton. The 23-year-old defender, who has played for Etoile Sportive du Sahel, one of Tunisia's top clubs, for five years, became a citizen of the north African country thanks to a Tunisian justice ministry ruling published on Monday. Henryk Kasperczak, the national coach, has confirmed that Clayton will be "called up for the next training session of the national team." Etoile Sportive are coached by a Brazilian, Santos, who has guided Clayton's career.

NAME OF THE GAME

No 31: WIMBLEDON

WIMBLEDON'S youngest supporters, who have only known seen their team play at Selhurst Park following the move from Plough Lane in 1991, might wonder why their club is named after a London suburb many miles away. Delving deeper into history, Wimbledon Old Centrals Football Club was formed in 1889 by old boys from Central School. The name lasted until 1905, when it was changed to plain old Wimbledon.

HISTORY LESSON

AS Manchester United and Newcastle United prepare for their match at Old Trafford today, both teams might like to reflect on their meeting in rather different circumstances at St James' Park just over two years ago.

Newcastle had led the table for almost the whole season, but had started to slip. Their previous two games had seen a 2-0 defeat at West Ham and a 3-3 draw at Manchester City. Manchester United had won five games in a row and were breathing down Newcastle's necks.

Manchester had won their meeting at Old Trafford in December, goals from Andy Cole and Roy Keane earning a 2-0 victory. At St James' Park it was the turn of Eric Cantona to score the only goal of the game and set

United on course for the championship. It proved to be critical for Newcastle, who lost three more of their last 10 games and could only finish runners-up.

Last season Manchester failed to score against Newcastle, who won famously 5-0 at St James' Park in October and fought out a goal-less draw at Old Trafford in May.

The 5-0 triumph was Newcastle's first win over Alex Ferguson's team in the Premiership. The 1993-94 season saw two 1-1 draws, a scoreline repeated at St James' Park the following season. When they met at Old Trafford in October 1994 Manchester won 2-0 with goals by Gary Pallister and Keith Gillespie, who later moved to Newcastle in the deal which saw Cole switch to Old Trafford.

THIS WEEK

ON 16 April 1988, Hearts beat Celtic 2-1. Hearts' win consolidated their second position in the Scottish Premier Division behind their opponents.

Rangers, under player-manager Graeme Souness, only managed to draw 1-1 with Hibernian to remain third, ten points adrift of their Old Firm rivals.

The next day, Hearts' prolific striker, John Robertson, ended his seven-year association with the club, joining Newcastle for £750,000. Robertson's departure did not unduly trouble his side, who finished the season second to Celtic.

Rangers finished third, 12 points off the lead. They have won every title since.

Contributors: Phil Shaw, Nick Harris, Paul Newman
Readers' contributions welcome. Send to Sidelines, Sports Desk, The Independent, 1 Canale Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 4DL
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Gross aims to avoid repeat of history

Can Tottenham avoid relegation, which they last suffered more than 20 years ago?
Glenn Moore reports

WHITE HART LANE, the last home game of the season. Tottenham win but go down regardless. There is a pitch invasion, there are banners and chants about the manager. Nothing unusual in that, except the protests are in his support. He may have led Spurs to relegation in his first season but the fans want him to stay.

An unimaginable scenario, except in Christian Gross's dreams? No. This was the reaction the last time Spurs went down, in 1977. Glenn Hoddle, Pat Jennings and Steve Perryman were in the team. Spurs had conceded 92 goals in the season, including eight at Derby and five at Manchester City and West Ham, yet Keith Burkinshaw was being lauded.

Should the unthinkable happen and Spurs not only lose at Barnsley today, but also go on to lose their Premiership status, do not expect a repeat. The game has moved on - as the rewards have risen so have the penalties for failure and neither directors, fans nor players show the patience of the past.

This week has been typical of the season with Darren Anderton, David Howells and Chris Armstrong all apparently expressing their frustration with the management. At various times this season a string of players have shown discontent in public or private and one insider this week estimated that 13 of the current squad are unhappy at the club.

This is not the sort of spirit a team engaged in a relegation battle wants. As Peter Taylor, another member of the 1977 side, said earlier this season: "We learned no club has a divine right to a place in the top division. We also learned we had to stick together. The present side have the quality to get out of trouble but they have to recover their confidence and realise the need to stick together and fight as a team. That means running back to retrieve lost situations when they might not otherwise have done."

It does not help that as many as 11 of the squad have their minds on the World Cup and several significant players also know they are unlikely to be at the club next season. Jürgen Klinsmann is definitely off. Nicola Berti has yet to be offered a contract. Sol Campbell is rumoured to be Anfield-bound, a number of major players have escape clauses in their contracts and others, such as Howells, Justin Edinburgh and Jose Dominguez, are unlikely to stay if Gross does. It would have been helpful to check the most significant of these probable departures, that of Campbell's, with the player but, though team captain, he refused to be interviewed.

Throughout all the dissent and defeat Gross, who was a promising midfielder with Lausanne when Spurs were last relegated, has re-



Echoes of the past? Tottenham fans philosophically accept their fate in 1977 (left) while Christian Gross, the current coach, contemplates another defeat.



Photograph: Kent Gavin; Dale Cherry

tained a dignified resolve. It was no different on Thursday as the press gathered at the club's plush new Chigwell training complex (now virtually finished after almost as many problems as the team) to pick over the latest entrails.

Gross, to his credit, never ducks a question though he can provide an obtuse answer - sometimes, but not always, because of the language barrier. Unlike some managers he is prepared to explain tactical decisions and does not belittle questioners.

Of Armstrong, who stormed off when substituted against Coventry on Monday, he said: "I can understand if players are not happy when they are taken off but I was not happy with his performance. There aren't problems between us. He is very ambitious and I like ambitious players like him. Darren Anderton and David Howells."

Anderton is unhappy at not starting and being overlooked as substitute when Moussa Saib was injured early in Monday's match. "I have to be careful with Anderton," said Gross. "He has had a lot of injury problems, he has to be patient. I could not bring him on for Saib as it was at the start of the game. He is fit to play but not for 90 minutes. I do not want, after any game this season, to say he is injured again. He had a full game in the reserves this week but there is a big difference between that

and the Premiership, especially the fight it will be at Barnsley."

Of Howells, who is unhappy at being left out and is not even in the 18 for today's game, Gross said: "He also had injury problems so I brought in Berti, who is more or less the same player." Gross has also preferred Colin Calderwood, a regular in Scotland's near-impenetrable defence, to Howells in midfield. "He gives me more security," explained Gross, though Tottenham fans feel the Scot would be better played in defence in place of Ramon Vega.

Vega not only chips in with important goals but is unwaveringly loyal to his compatriot manager. Unfortunately, Vega is responsible for conceding more goals than he scores. Unused to playing in a back four, he has regularly been caught

out and his continued selection smacks of favouritism, which never helps team spirit. Not that Vega is a bad player; witness his performance for Switzerland against an England attack of Alan Shearer and Michael Owen. But then he had Stuttgart's Murat Yakin sweeping behind him, at Tottenham there is just space.

Playing Vega also means leaving out John Scales and Gary Mabbutt, who, with Howells, is seen as providing the fighting heart of the club. Then there is the playing of Allan Nielsen at left-back. This is a result of selling the promising Jamie Clapham, failing to buy Andy Hinchcliffe and falling out with Justin Edinburgh and Dean Austin, leaving no cover when Clive Wilson was injured.

Not that Gross is even primarily responsible for Spurs' situation. In-

deed, since he took over in November results have improved, with 23 points coming from 19 games compared to 13 points from 15 before his arrival. The real problems go back much further, with many fans dating the current struggles back to Irving Scholar's ill-fated attempt to commercialise the club in the mid-1980s - how ironic it will be if Scholar goes up with Nottingham Forest as Tottenham go down.

Though Spurs still run out to the lyrics "Tottenham are the greatest team the world has ever seen", the reality is different. They have not won the championship since 1961 and have only won one trophy, the 1991 FA Cup, in 14 years. They have pretensions to be among the European elite yet they have only played one season in Europe in a dozen years.

The reigns of Burkinshaw, David Pleat and Terry Venables all hinted at a return to the glory, glory, years of the early 60s but were each undone by boardroom wrangling or scandal. The last few years have been a struggle as Ossie Ardiles and Gerry Francis failed, in differing ways, to balance the fans' desire for stylish football with an equally insistent demand for success. By the time Francis resigned, confidence, sapped by poor results, was low.

Joe Kinnear, of Wimbledon, was in the frame as Francis' replacement. A former Spurs player and disciple of Bill Nicholson, he had the right combination of a feel for the club and a proven record of organizing teams.

However, the example of Arsenal and Chelsea, where foreign managers had brought glamour and success, swayed the club and, after a rebuttal from Ottmar Hitzfeld, who had steered Borussia Dortmund to European Cup triumph, they plucked Gross from the backwater of Swiss football. He was quickly given Klinsmann, billed as a saviour but actually a millstone, but could not get permission to hire Fritz Schmid, his confidante and fitness trainer.

Gross speaks confidently of next season but there must be doubts about his remaining even if Spurs stay up. Alan Sugar, who was selling cheap hi-fi systems in east London when Tottenham were last relegat-

ed, would be keen to avoid having to appoint yet another manager, his fifth in eight years, yet there is also uncertainty about his continued commitment. He has often talked about stepping aside if he is not successful and may soon do so to allow his son, Daniel, to take over. This could open the door to either Kinnear or Raddy Antic, a former protégé of David Pleat, Spurs' Director of Football, who is soon to finish a successful spell at Atletico Madrid.

Gross' fate would surely be sealed by relegation even if, as in 1977, the fault is not all his. Then the previous manager, Terry Neill, a former Arsenal player whose Spurs team was unadventurous, was blamed by fans for a relegation which ended 27 years in the top flight.

The following season Spurs were never out of the three automatic promotion places and, despite a late wobble, they regained elite status.

Whatever happens, changes must lie ahead. As Arsenal chase a second double the glory, glory days of Spurs' historic brace are now so distant as to be ancient history. How curious that one of the game's supposedly wealthy glamour clubs has not won the title since the days of the maximum wage. But then, it is not all about money, as Barnsley, who were in the old Fourth Division the last time Spurs went down, hope to show today.

Tottenham: More caps than points (and that's just Klinsmann)

FULL INTERNATIONALS

Ian Walker England
Frode Grodas Norway
Colin Calderwood Scotland
Ramon Vega Switzerland
John Scales England
Sol Campbell England
Gary Mabbutt England
Nicola Berti Italy
Allan Nielsen Denmark

Darren Anderton England
Moussa Saib Algeria
Jose Dominguez Portugal
David Glinola France
Andy Sinton England
Les Ferdinand England
Jürgen Klinsmann Germany

OTHER INTERNATIONALS
Espen Baardsen Norway U-21
Stephen Carr Ireland U-21

Ruel Fox England U-21
Steffen Iversen Norway U-21
Chris Armstrong England U-21

NON-INTERNATIONALS

Justin Edinburgh
Dean Austin
Clive Wilson
David Howells
Stephen Clemence
Garry Brady

Money makes its mark on Welsh game

LIKE every season past and every season future, this one will throw up its fair share of winners and losers.

It has yet to reveal, of course, the winners of the biggest prize of all, but among those who will be remembered positively from 1997/98 so far are: last season's Conference champions Nucleusfield, unbeaten as yet at their Moss Rose ground and heading for promotion to Division Two; Notts County, one of the only teams to have secured promotion in March; Halifax, unbeaten at home with one to play and heading for the Nationwide; and Dundee, runaway leaders of the Scottish First Division and invincible anywhere but Dens Park.

But the boot is very much on the other foot for Crystal Palace, who have not won at Selhurst Park for Hibernian, who have failed to win away from Easter Road; for Doncaster, who were Vauxhall Conference-bound by Christmas; and for Cemaes Bay (or Cemaes Ynys Mon to be exact) who play, just about, in the League of Wales.

Cemaes Bay's 'goals against' and 'points for' tally makes Doncaster look championship material - 147 and nine respectively - and it is as certain as Peter Reid swearing again this season that this tiny club

from a tiny village on the northern tip of Anglesey will be playing their football in the Cymru Alliance league next season alongside the likes of Cefn Druids and Mold Alexandra.

Two weeks ago they were thrashed 12-0 by leaders Barry Town; then Newtown and Bangor City rubbed salt in the wound by beating them 11-1 and 6-0 over Easter. A spectator described breaching Cemaes Bay's defence as "as easy as cracking an egg".

Those who disparagingly consider Welsh football to be a contradiction in terms might not be surprised, but you have to feel sympathy for Cemaes Bay's plight. Imagine Blackburn without Jack Walker (and his money) or Fulham without Mohammed Al Fayed's fortune, and you begin to get the picture.

Because Cemaes Bay, aiming to consolidate last season's mid-table position and going along quite nicely, suddenly had their pitch pulled from under their feet when chairman Joe Davis decided to take his money and run; in this case, to league rivals Cwmbran Town.

Unable to pay the wages of even their semi-professional players, Cemaes Bay have had to call upon local amateurs, hence the humiliating scorelines. But what is even more galling for them is that Cwm-



OLIVIA BLAIR

ON A SEASON TO SWIFTLY FORGET FOR CEMAES BAY

bran do not really represent a significantly better investment not like, for instance, pulling out of Manchester City to invest in United.

Sure, they are currently fourth in the league, and played in this season's Cup-Winners' Cup as beaten Welsh Cup finalists (double winners Barry Town were in the European Cup), but the nearest they got to the likes of Chelsea and Stuttgart was in the bag for the draw (they were beaten 5-1 and 8-0 by National Bucharest).

This season they went out of the Welsh Cup at the quarter-final stage (the semi-finals will be contested today), and

were not "invited" to play in this inaugural season of the FAW Invitation Cup. Those who were - Barry Town, Newtown, Conwy United and Bangor City - were selected because they were the four top-placed league sides in 1996/97.

Nevertheless, this Cup - for which the three Welsh Nationwide League clubs plus Merthyr Tydfil of the Dr Martens Premier Division also competed - has been a resounding success. Heavily funded by BBC Wales and worth at least £100,000 (which in Welsh football represents a small fortune) to the winners, it will return as the FAW Premier Cup next season when the number of Welsh League clubs will be increased to eight.

The semi-final second legs are on Tuesday, when Wrexham will defend a 2-0 lead at Newtown and Merthyr will try to peg back four goals at Cardiff. But whether Merthyr will finish the season as winners or losers depends on more than the outcome of their cup run.

Favourites to win the Dr Martens Premier, they face the prospect of being denied promotion to the Vauxhall Conference: having formed a new company at the end of last season to run the existing club and take on debts of around £250,000, Merthyr fall short of the standards set by a "new"

Conference ruling that a new company has to have traded for a full calendar year to take part.

What started off as "rather provocative discussions" between the club and the Conference have apparently eased to the point at which Merthyr are confident of reaching an agreement, but it is not the first time the club have had to fight their corner flag. However, according to League of Wales secretary John Deskin, there is no longer any animosity regarding the choice of Merthyr and fellow Welsh "exiles" Cwmbran Bay and Newport to opt out of Wales.

Originally the concern was that Uefa would not recognise the League; having allayed that fear, the League is now concerned with finding sponsorship to the tune of £150,000, and is helped in its search by Neville Southall, who now reads the Financial Times to "gen up" on Wales' wealthiest businesses.

One of those - a business in Oswestry - put money into League club Llansantffraid on the condition that the club took on the company name. So Llansantffraid have become, er, Total Network Solutions, in the same way that Inter Cardiff are now known as Inter Cable-Tel. It is proof, as if any is needed, of how loudly money talks in Welsh football.

We can all combat the violence

AFTER the fatal stabbing of a Fulham fan at Gillingham, what should football supporters do now? We hope the tide of violence, which for 10 years has ebbed, is not rising again. But if it is, there will be calls for more police inside grounds, more restriction on our movements and harsher punishment for hooligans. One trusts that ID cards will not be disintegrated, but the call to bring back fences (still common on the Continent) will not remain dormant if more officials are attacked on the model of incidents at Oakwell and Fratton Park.

These ideas will not work, but they are easy to prescribe, they suit the outlook of the Government, and they will be seen to assist the campaign for the 2006 World Cup. If supporters come up with no alternatives, they will prevail by default.

One reason football violence becomes possible is that the perpetrators think they do it on behalf of a much larger group, who do not take part, but give tacit agreement to the violence. The largest group, of course, disapprove entirely, but rarely do anything about it.

In 1996, there were fears of widespread violence at the Oxford v Swindon derby. This is a grim fixture, with an atmosphere that you might

have thought was left behind in the 1970s.

On this occasion, the local media made things worse by encouraging a slanging match over the relative merits of Oxford and Swindon. Regional TV gave representatives of local papers a minute each to bad-mouth the opposing town. It was a green light to the respective hooligans.

At the time I co-edited an Oxford fanzine, I was contacted by my Swindon counterparts, who shared these

more than a moral lecture. We insisted that violence ruined the fixture. It made football frightening and unpleasant. It ruined our reputation in the public eye, and the real victims were supporters. As ordinary fans, we made opposition to violence a public issue.

In the event, there was practically no violence. I can't prove that our initiative was the reason: Oxford won 3-0, so perhaps our hooligans were sated, their demoralised. But I believe we had an effect.

Of course we did not convince violent individuals to become followers of Gandhi. But we may have influenced their periphery, their cheerleaders, by making them think, making them unsure whether it was right to fight for Oxford.

Supporters can combat violence where the police and courts cannot, with their own initiatives. This is the wedge with which we can split the violent from the would-be violent. There can be no going back, either to violence or to spikes and fences. Supporters can pre-empt both.

The alternatives are too awful to contemplate, and we stand to lose too much. Last month, a young man lost his life.

FAN'S EYE VIEW

NO 250 FIGHTING FOOTBALL HOOLOGANISM BY ED HORTON

fears - and acted on them. They understood that the only people who can really influence football supporters are other supporters. The police are distrusted, the players' influence is limited and nobody listens to sanctimonious politicians. But sometimes fans listen to other fans.

Together, we embarked on press releases, media appearances and fanzine articles expressing opposition to the mutual contempt. This was



United form has Ferguson on the rails

Football

By Trevor Haylett

WE SHOULD presumably discount the theory that Alex Ferguson joined the horse-racing fraternity because having seen Arsenal creep up on the rails to threaten Manchester United's championship lead he wanted a pastime that was free of twists and turns and unexpected hurdles.

Similarly the view that he was persuaded into the "Sport of Kings" by the Manchester bookmaker who prematurely paid out on a United title success a month ago and was looking for a quick way to win back his money can be dismissed as mischievous speculation.

We should like Ferguson at his word when he says he has invested in prime horse flesh as a means of releasing some of the pressure that can become intolerable at this stage of the season. On Thursday he was a winner for the first time when his two-year-old Queensland Star finished ahead of the field in the 4.45 at Newmarket. But will the United manager come out on top in the race that really matters to him? The more you look at current form, and particularly the Easter outings, the more the Premiership appears destined for the Highbury stable.

Only a month ago United had a seemingly unassailable advantage yet such has been the ground made up by Arsenal's remorseless sprint in the final furlong that the two leaders

could be swapping places by teatime tonight. With only a single point separating them, the Gunners are at home to Wimbledon while Ferguson's team play host to Arsenal's FA Cup final opponents, Newcastle.

It is the London derby which holds most intrigue. Following their formidable display at Blackburn on Monday, Arsenal are now odds-on favourites to deny Old Trafford its fifth crown in six years though Wimbledon have been unbeaten at Highbury in their last nine visits and have the best defensive record away from home in the Premiership, with just 15 goals conceded in 15 games.

In 1989 Arsenal's first championship under George Graham looked to have been snatched by Wimbledon's 2-2 draw away from home before an unbelievable sequence of events saw the Gunners awarded their prize after a heart-stopping climax at Anfield. Then, as now, their final fixtures included Wimbledon, Derby and Liverpool.

After Newcastle, United visit Selhurst Park to take on Crystal Palace (a fixture which has not stretched many away teams this season). They then host Leeds and finish in Yorkshire with a game at Barnsley.

The challenge Ferguson has set his side is to win all four. "Arsenal are in the driving seat at the moment and we are waiting for them to make a mistake," he said. "That is all we can do."

"The most important thing is for us to win our games although it's always very difficult

at this stage of the season because teams are fighting hard for various reasons."

Arsenal have both Steve Bould and Martin Keown suspended and Gilles Grimandi, a natural defensive replacement, is injured. Arsène Wenger may decide to switch Emmanuel Petit to the back line with Stephen Hughes coming into midfield or he could start with Matthew Upson - 19 today - alongside Tony Adams.

The Highbury manager said: "Against Blackburn we played a passing game and against Wimbledon we must fight physically and cope with long balls. That is why the championship is so difficult as the games are so different. We must forget about Blackburn and focus just on Wimbledon."

"We were on a high at Blackburn which was one of the moments when we reached what we want to do but my job is to convince everyone we must battle very hard tomorrow and if we are not mentally prepared we will be disappointed. We have the title in our hands but we are not over confident."

Beneath the top two, the battle for the UEFA Cup places was given a shot in the arm by Chelsea's remarkable victory over Vicenza on Thursday that means they will be contesting the Cup-Winners' Cup final. Should they beat Stuttgart in Stockholm on 13 May, the Stamford Bridge club will re-enter the same competition next season releasing the UEFA Cup place that was theirs after winning the Coca-Cola Cup.

It means that seventh place could be a European berth for next season and add spice to this afternoon's clash at Upton Park between West Ham in eighth and Blackburn, who are two places and two points better off.

John Harrison will be anxious to sign off for the Hammers in the fashion he began the season - with goals and more goals - rather than the way he has ended it, on a flurry of cards, red and yellow, that means he will miss the last four games through suspension.

Blackburn could welcome back their second choice goalkeeper John Filan, who broke an arm in August.



Michael Atherton prepares for action on Hove's rain-soaked pitch yesterday

Photograph: David Ashdown

Atherton and Lara both draw blanks

Cricket

By Derrick Whyte

THE CARIBBEAN it was not, Brian Lara and Michael Atherton, opposing captains in the winter Test series between the West Indies and England, resigned to action yesterday as the Leicestershire Assured County Championship season started after a week of overcast skies, torrential rain and sodden pitches.

If the two men had looked forward to the occasion with less than overwhelming enthusiasm, their mood could hardly have been improved after their cameo appearances. Both men were dismissed without scoring.

Atherton, playing for Leicestershire against Sussex at Hove on a day ruined by rain, fell leg before to Jason Lewry. Lara, meanwhile, lasted only eight balls at Edgbaston for Warwickshire at home to Durham - the county he hit for a world record 501 not out on the same ground in 1994 - before he was caught by Martin Spight off the bowling of John Wood.

Lara found himself upstaged by his colleague, Neil Smith, who struck the opening championship century of the campaign. Smith, who reached his century in 137 minutes off only 11 balls, raised Warwickshire's hopes of a sizeable first-innings total after they had been 24 for 3 following the departures of Lara, Dominic Odetunmbi and Nick Knight.

David Byas also scored a first-day century as Yorkshire built a good total against Somerset at Headingley. Yorkshire recovered well after a shaky start caused by Anthony McGrath's dismissal for a duck with only one run on the board.

While Atherton failed, his vice-captain in the Caribbean, Nasser Hussain, made 68 as Essex built a useful total against Worcestershire at New Road.

After a rainy week there was a surprisingly large amount of cricket played yesterday, with Canterbury and the Oval the only grounds suffering washouts.

More cricket, page 19

World Cup ticket numbers

WORLD CUP organisers yesterday announced the telephone numbers for supporters wishing to buy the final 110,000 tickets for this summer's tournament.

In response to criticisms that not enough tickets had been made available to ordinary fans overseas, the organising committee announced last week that it would make extra tickets available by phone from next Tuesday.

The telephone numbers to call are (00-33-1-49-87-53-54 (calls from Europe); (08-03-00-19-98 (calls from within

France); and 01-49-87-53-54 (calls from the French colonies). Lines will be open from 07.00 BST until 19.00 on weekdays and from 08.00 BST until 19.00 on Saturday 2 May.

There are tickets available for all first and second round matches, except the opening game between Brazil and Scotland on 10 June. Tickets will be available on a first-come first-served basis and can be paid for by credit card.

Each buyer will be allowed to purchase up to four tickets per game, with an overall limit of 16 tickets per person.

ELEVEN PAGES OF SPORT BEGIN ON PAGE 14

James and Evans hold off first salvo

By Derek Hodgson at Bristol

Gloucestershire v Glamorgan

GLAMORGAN, the Britannic Assurance champions, had to wait until 2pm to start the defence of their title, then lost the toss and had to bat on a surface of unknown properties. The cloud had lifted but the wind stayed fierce and cold all day and Courtney Walsh, fresh from a Trinidad heatwave was said, by a local, to have been "limbering up in a duvet".

Gloucestershire did at least have their overseas professional present; Glamorgan are still awaiting Waqar's arrival. Yet it was no day for either of these great fast bowlers, rather one for those traditional English skills of seam and swing.

It happened that the first pitch from the groundsmen, David Bridle, was both reasonably firm and fair. Mike Smith needs South-western zephyrs for his swing, not a sleet-threatening blow, while Walsh, with the wind was mostly careful to fire in no more than one ball an over, minimising the risk of stretch and strain in this climate.

Accordingly Steve James, with deft turns to leg, and Alun Evans, hitting straighter, managed an assured opening stand of 64 in 27 overs, seeing off the opening assault and coping with the second string of Jon Lewis and Mark Alleyne. Both survived leg-before appeals, albeit from the field and from the ring, and Alleyne might have been beginning to wish he had opted to bat when he switched

to bowl around the wicket to Evans.

The young batsman tried a flick to leg to a ball slanting across him, and it flew high off the blade to second slip. The next ball, the first of the next over, was quick enough to surprise James, who was caught behind the wicket. Most of the several hundred brave souls watching suddenly found unexpected warmth.

Walsh, who was looking suffer by the minute, returned for his second spell and had his first delivery cut to the boundary by an exceedingly confident looking Matthew Maynard. The champions were just beginning to pick up momentum again when, with the last ball before tea, Walsh totally confounded their captain with a change of pace.

David Graveney, the chairman of selectors, attended with an obvious interest in Glamorgan (But just who was he looking at? Maynard? James?). He is also a believer in Smith's talents at Test level and Alleyne, as has been said before, is an all-rounder of misleading capacity. He does have all the credentials required of a one-day player and the World Cup is looming up.

It was Alleyne, bowling with constant changes of pace, who trapped Tony Cottee after tea. By that stage, Walsh was down to using only half a run but he was still managing to pitch deliveries short enough for Adrian Dale to win byes from a ball that flew off his chest.

This was a day of Cool Britannic and Hardy Assurance.

LAND OF DIPS

GLORY.

CHARLES WELLS FAMILY BREWERY, BEDFORD, EST 1876

BREWING FOR ENGLAND

THE INDEPENDENT CROSSWORD

No. 3588, Saturday 18 April By Mass

ACROSS

- Birds loudly migrating, but not far (6)
- Girl with county slant, vocally (7)
- Polo activities? (12)
- Drink group's splitting (7)
- Clean with vacuum (5)
- Measure appeared as decreed (7)
- Designate State line (4)
- To whom the inner man's of special interest (12)
- Leaving nothing in gallery, boxing collection up (9)
- After time fixes brackets (7)
- Seconds ticking over, slipping away (7)
- Deceived defence is broken, split by cunning mime (7)
- Vehicle to run goods (5)
- Modest about piano transcript (4)

DOWN

- An egret, it could be, in pool (9)
- Girl with county slant, vocally (7)
- Polo activities? (12)
- Drink group's splitting (7)
- Clean with vacuum (5)
- Measure appeared as decreed (7)
- Designate State line (4)
- To whom the inner man's of special interest (12)
- Leaving nothing in gallery, boxing collection up (9)
- After time fixes brackets (7)
- Seconds ticking over, slipping away (7)
- Deceived defence is broken, split by cunning mime (7)
- Vehicle to run goods (5)
- Modest about piano transcript (4)

Friday's solution

Last Saturday's solution

The first five correct solutions to this week's puzzle opened next Thursday receive hand-drawn copies of the Oxford Dictionary of Quotations. Answers and winners' names will be published next Saturday. Send solutions to Saturday Crossword, P.O. Box 4018, The Independent, 1 Canada Square, Canary Wharf, London E14 5BL. Please use the box number and postcode and give your own postcode. Last week's winners: J Edwards, Christchurch; D Scotchbrook, Herne Bay; P & K Burns, Wford; V Johns, Braintree; C Moore, London E4.

هنا من الأجر



YOUR MONEY

Personal finance, motoring and property

Saturday 18 April 1998

How to finger card fraudsters

With fraud costing credit card issuers £96m a year, firms are looking at hi-tech alternatives to signatures. Paul Stade reports

Imagine trying to pay for your purchase with a credit card. You proffer the card at the till. Staff behind the counter swipe it through a machine and then ask to carry out a fingerprint check on you. Or demand that you look into another machine for your iris to be "read".

Sounds like Big Brother gone mad? The two examples above are the latest techniques being tested as part of the long-running battle to combat plastic card fraud, which cost card companies £96m in 1996. Retailers still rely mostly on a basic signature to establish that card users are who they say they are. But all the while, they are devising more sophisticated systems to combat fraudsters.

Fingerprinting of credit and debit cardholders has even been given a seal of approval by the authors of a new Home Office report, issued last month.

Michael Levi, professor of criminology at Cardiff University and one of the authors of the report, suggests all cards should carry the owner's fingerprints, which can then be checked against records held at the till.

This, he argues, would not only guard against fraud, but would help the police. "Fingerprinting and voiceprints are less useful for search and arrest, since they are not included in police records," he points out.

There is no technical problem in encoding fingerprints on a microchip attached to the card. There are 110,000 chip cards already being tested in Northampton and Dunfermline. The chips do the same job as the magnetic strip which cards already carry, but can hold a lot more information.

Collecting customers' fingerprints to check the cards

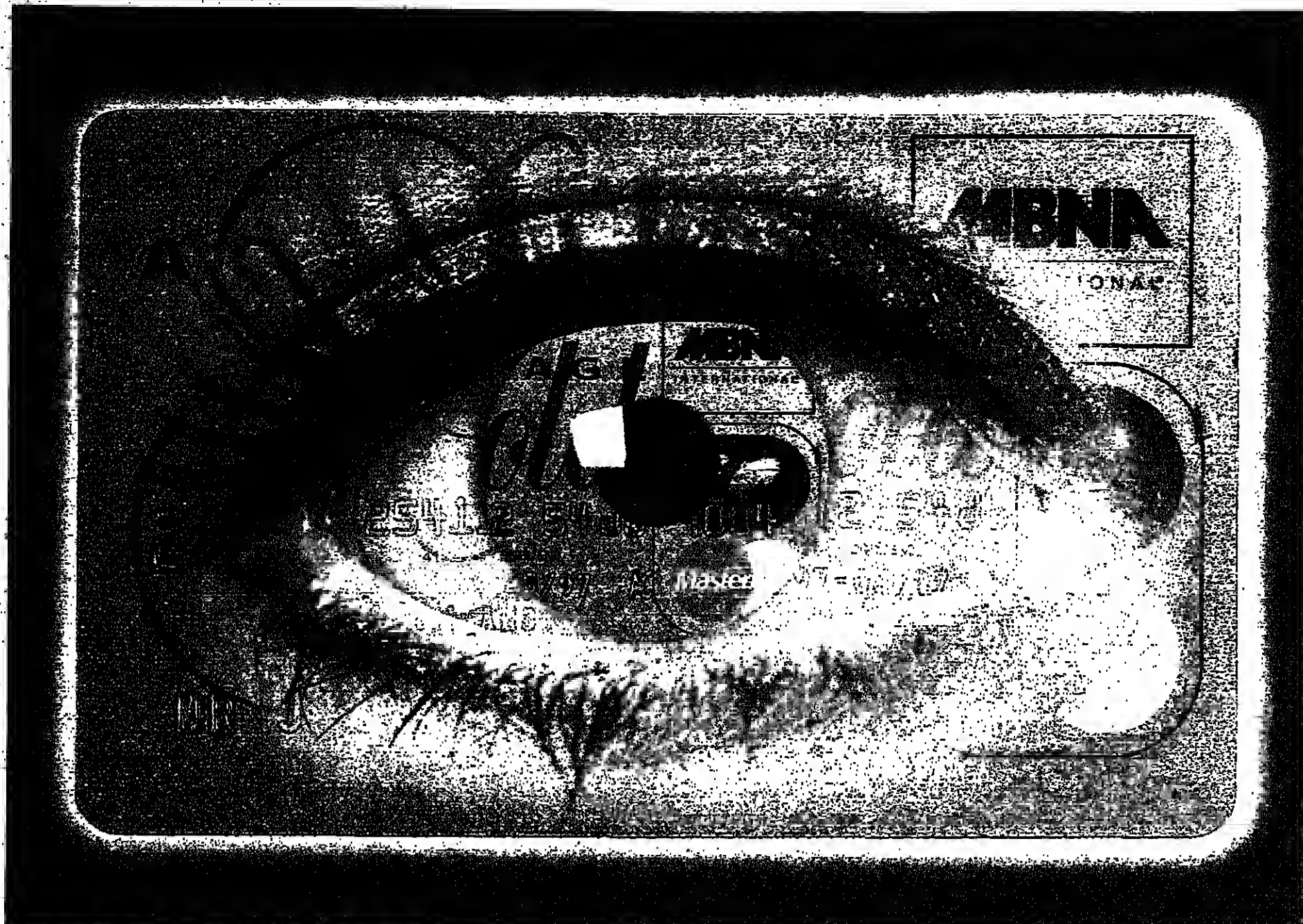


Illustration: Jonathan Anstee

against - with all the civil liberty issues that implies - may prove more of a challenge.

Steve Collins, director of emerging markets at Barclays, says: "Fingerprinting is one of the options we are considering. What we have at the moment is an authentication mechanism in the chip to prove the authenticity of the card. The next thing to worry about is whether the person presenting the card is the

genuine owner," Richard Tyson-Davies of the Association of Payment Clearing Systems calls the chip cards an investment in the future, and says fingerprints may be included one day. "We have the capacity there if it's needed," he says. His guess is that the first nationwide chip cards will be issued later this year.

Card issuers must walk a tightrope between security and usability. There is little point in

making a fraud-proof card if that leads to the real owner often being rejected when he tries to use it. Experiments with iris-scans at cash machines have so far failed to crack this problem.

Erica Harper of Royal Bank of Scotland says: "With the iris ones, until very recently, the rejection rate for legitimate cardholders was too high. Everyone gets annoyed if their card is used fraudulently, but even

more annoyed if they're wrongly rejected."

We are all endlessly perverse in our attitudes towards checks like these. Mr Collins says: "The research that's been done on fingerprints indicates that, if you don't get the occasional rejection, people don't think it's doing anything." The latest generation of eye-scanning technology will soon be tested in Swindon, where Nationwide

plans to add a scanning camera to its head office cash machine. The society hopes to persuade some 1,000 customers to volunteer for the trial. Nationwide's Mark Hamilton says: "We'll scan their iris and put it into a database. Once you're on the database, instead of keying in your PIN number, you can have your iris recognised."

This technology too has its limits. Anyone over six foot six

will be out of the Nationwide camera's range, and people with thick glasses may find the machine cannot recognise them.

It may be that the humble signature is not such a bad method after all. Royal Bank of Scotland claims to have prevented fraudulent transactions worth over £5.5m in the past five years simply by adding the customer's signature to the card before it is posted out.

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Pension plea

Pension funds this week called for an overhaul of the tax system affecting them, claiming simpler rules on how much may be invested would save between £1bn and £2bn. This money could then be used to boost retirement incomes, said the National Association of Pension Funds (NAPF).

The NAPF wants to see existing limits scrapped on the maximum 15 per cent of salary that can be paid into a pension fund. It also wants the upper earnings cap of £87,600 to be abolished. It claims its proposals would be tax-neutral, because pensions could still be taxed when they are paid as income.

Property rise

House prices rose by 0.6 per cent in March, compared with no change the previous month. The rise brings to 5 per cent the annual rate of house price inflation, according to Halifax. The figures masked disparities among regions: prices in the past year rose by 12.4 per cent in London and the South-east, but fell by up to 1 per cent in Yorkshire, Humberside and Scotland.

Gone for a song

Once upon a time you were probably too stoned out of your head to notice it. Meanwhile, canny collectors who took home psychedelic posters from 1960s gigs may be sitting on a mint. John Windsor tells all. Page 3

Offshore assets

Working abroad for a few years can be one of the most exciting periods in anyone's life. It also helps if someone is there to help with all the relocation work, as Robert Liebman explains. Page 9

Fingerprinting on cards looks sure to prove a valuable new source of gory tales for the saloon bar raconteur. Already we have the urban myth of a tourist visiting Latin America who is mugged and awakes in an alley to find one of his kidneys has been removed. It is a short step from there to tales of cardholders being robbed, not only of their cards

THUMBS UP FOR VERIFICATION TALES?

but also of the body parts needed to use them. One of the bank professionals I spoke to in preparing this piece told me such a story in all seriousness. She had heard that, in South Africa, collecting your unemployment benefit depends on identifying yourself with a

thumb print. Fraudsters, she said, had found a way round this. "They were cutting off people's thumbs," she whispered.

This seemed unlikely, if only because officials are likely to notice if you produce a bloody thumb to stamp the relevant documentation. South

Africa House confirms that the country's benefit system does not use fingerprints, so what we have here is a genuine urban myth.

Of course, simply because a story is untrue does not mean it will not be told. How long before people here are telling one another about a friend of a friend who had his ATM card stolen - "and they cut out his eyes".

Breaking the chains around housebuyers

Speed up property sales and, some believe, you throttle gazumping, the nasty practice whereby buyers are elbowed aside by other buyers bearing more future. The Law Society has introduced a series of tentative anti-gazumping proposals for consideration by the Government Homebuying Review Group.

The proposals comprise flexible financing, a stockholding company and a vendor-prepared house MOT. Flexible financing enables sellers to finance a new property without first selling their current premises. Stockholding companies would help prevent a chain breaking by temporarily buying properties. The pack includes a draft contract, search and a log-book of repairs and basic house information to be passed on by the vendor to the prospective buyer.

The proposals aim "to make every conveyancing transaction independent of all others". In the Law Society's example, the sellers, with a £40,000 mortgage, are offering an £80,000 house. They want to buy a property for £110,000 and assume a £70,000 mortgage. The total - temporary - mortgage required is £110,000.

Because the borrower only needs the extra amount until the old property is sold, the extra costs of this approach would not be too high, the Law Society argues. The cost of temporarily having two debts would be spread over the term of the new mortgage. "A capitalised sum would not significantly increase the cost of the £70,000 mortgage, and a mortgage on a repayment basis need not

A set of proposals to speed up housebuying is being proposed by the Law Society, writes Robert Liebman

increase the annual cost at all. The repayment period could be extended." The Law Society wants the Government to offer tax incentives to the stockholding companies buying the surplus properties. But it claims this would be self-financing because, in return, there would be an increase in property transactions, leading to more stamp duty being paid.

Kenneth Byass, chairman of the Law Society's property and commercial services committee, says: "Although further work is needed to free the residential property market from chains, initial Law Society analysis has clearly shown it could be achieved."

But according to chartered surveyor Malcolm Hollis, the Law Society's proposals could cost homebuyers considerably more. "Somebody buys your home for you and subsequently sells it, and at both levels somebody is making money," he says. These stockholding companies have personnel and other costs "all of which are being paid for out of the reduced amount you'll get for your home".

Mr Hollis is far from convinced that, by availing themselves of the stockholding company, individual links in the chain can independently speed things up. He says: "It would work if everyone accepted the brokerage process because, in effect, it is analogous to buying a used motor car. You still have

the problem of people whose home you want to buy needing to move out, which means you have to bridge and encourage them to go. It is a case of everyone doing it. It won't be successful if only one or two in the chain do it."

North London estate agent Joanna Haydon-Knowell welcomes "anything that speeds up the process", but warns these proposals contain many niggly bits. "Stockholding organisations could easily mean that some vendors will not get the best prices," she says. "If these companies sell on the properties using only local agents, sellers may lose out."

Ms Haydon-Knowell observes that even a modest additional cost can have a big impact: "Most sellers are trading up, paying more than they are selling for. A differential of a few thousand pounds could make the difference in terms of what they really want to buy, or their budget for decorating and repairs."

She notes that "from going on to the market to completion, most sales take more than three months" - the period of time for which searches are legally valid. In any event, "most purchasers will be wary of a survey done by the vendor". She also foresees scepticism from the banks and building societies.

Solicitors also have doubts. Bob Hall, of Baker & McKenzie, believes that "the flexible finance idea is too timid,

and the vendor information pack does not go far enough". The Law Society's example works "only because the prices mentioned are feasible. You have a more difficult problem if, let us say, a purchaser already has a high mortgage on an existing property. The problem is the cost of finding the solution, and I don't think tinkering with flexible finance or stockholding is actually going to solve it."

Mr Hall wonders that the Law Society didn't emphasise lock-out agreements, where a deal to buy a home means the vendor removes it from the market, and he thinks that "the state could even require vendors, if they breach the agreement, to pay the purchaser's aborted costs".

He adds: "There must be a sufficient number of purchasers to enable insurance companies to offer policies so that, for a premium, if a purchaser can't find a buyer within a certain time period, the insurer will pay a monthly sum in respect of additional mortgage costs."

As for unrealistic buyers wanting properties they clearly cannot afford, Mr Hall adds: "I don't think we should get into state-backed arrangements which somehow take the risk out of purchasing property. It is not the state's role to remove commercial pressure and the realities of buying a property." Mr Hollis concedes that the proposals "could speed up the process but only if people were prepared to pay for the privilege. These sums would be hard to come by, and I can't see people willingly spending it".

Thought for the day

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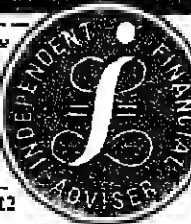
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BREWING FOREVER



Buying a house could not be easier

NIC CICUTTI

I sold a home once, to a couple of first-time buyers while I was living in rented accommodation. So the effect of the dreaded "chain", where one's transaction is dependent on the fortunes of myriad other buyers and vendors, was not too great on me.

But others tell me that the psychological effect of a chain breaking down is not to be downplayed. So I'm generally in favour of anything which cuts extra trauma for homebuyers.

Yet somehow, I get the feeling this week's Law Society proposal on how to avoid such traumas (detailed on our front page), is not the answer to the problem. Probably, Law Society chiefs must have felt that even they could come up with something clever on this subject, the credibility of lawyers as probably the biggest earners in the entire househunting process would be shot to pieces.

In fact, their proposals feel more like the product of one of those late-night, alcohol-fuelled attempts to solve the world's ills. Usually, as now, the cold light of day reveals these big ideas for what they really are.

The problem, as the experts in our own piece explain, is that one of the suggestions the Law Society believes is the best way forward - stockholding companies that buy up your home if private buyers drop out or don't even materialise - depends on everyone in the chain adopting the same method.

It means sellers probably having to accept a significantly lower price for their properties, in order to fund the administration costs (and

the profits) of these firms. I'm not convinced many buyers would accept this option, particularly at a time of fast-rising house price inflation. Under such conditions, gazumping rules and chains break. Meanwhile, in times of financial crises, lenders will not be too keen on offering mortgages to cover both the cost of the new home and the existing loan on the old one until it is sold.

It is unlikely that the Government would want to give stockholding companies the tax breaks urged by the Law Society. All in all, this is a mishmash of ideas which, even if enacted, will only have a limited effect on transaction times and costs.

So what is the alternative? To be honest, I don't think there is much of a solution. The reality is that even lock-out agreements, whereby houses are taken off the market once an offer is accepted, or forcing buyers (and sellers) to pay for aborted purchase costs, would not be that effective. In this last instance, it is likely people would become far more litigious, claiming all sorts of excuses prevented a transaction from being completed. Ultimately, the reality for anyone wishing to enter the home ownership stakes is that there is pain alongside the ecstasy involved. Half-baked solutions do little to prevent that.

And finally, congratulations to Edmund Tibbitt, one of our contributors, who won the British Insurance & Investment Brokers' Association award for Journalist of the Year. He also took first prize in the consumer broadsheet category for a story which appeared in this paper last year. The best writers really do appear in this section.

MONEY MAKEOVER

Disability needn't handicap your retirement

Name: Stephen Brazier
Age: 51

Occupation: Local government officer
The problem: Stephen is about to take early retirement after having recently been registered as blind. His concerns are to maximise his family's income in retirement, both by using his existing investments and a lump sum he will receive on leaving work.

The advice: By making full use of various state benefits, investing some of his retirement money in a range of relatively safe corporate-bond personal equity plans (PEPs) this year, individual Savings Accounts next year, plus "distribution bonds", Stephen should be able to improve his family finances.

Stephen Brazier says that he is a natural planner. He has been planning his retirement for some years, during which time the primary objective has been to save aggressively. With a joint annual income of £50,000-plus, no mortgage and relatively low overheads, Stephen and his wife Carol have sailed away enough to enable them both to feel financially secure.

This is important for Stephen, who has recently been registered as blind and, as a result, is about to take ill-health retirement. Carol, who also works in local government, is not planning to give up work for the time being.

Stephen expects an annual pension of around £17,000, considerably less than his current £40,000 salary, but is confident the family can manage. Any entitlement to state benefits would put them in the "comfort zone", he feels. The adviser, Graham Bates is chairman at Bates & Partners, a leading independent financial advice firm with branches nationwide (0113 295 5955). The advice: Stephen should apply for the disability living allowance, which is available in two parts. A care allowance pays a weekly amount based on three different bands - £13.16, £35.85 and £51.30 - and a mobility allowance, which

pays a weekly sum of either £13.60 or £35.85. These benefits are paid free of tax up to a maximum age of 65.

Although the disability living allowance is not means tested, any amount for which Stephen is eligible has to be determined by a benefits officer and is based on an assessment of the level of care required.

In addition, Stephen could apply for incapacity benefit, available up to the age of 65. Again, incapacity benefit is not means tested, although payments are taxable at your highest rate. National Insurance contributions are credited for you up to the age of 65 and this was one of Stephen's concerns, to ensure his eligibility for a full state pension. During the first 28 weeks of a claim, incapacity benefit is £48.80 a week. In weeks 29 to 52, it increases to £57.70 and after 12 months, to £64.70.

As Stephen has a dependent daughter, he may also be able to claim a small additional amount in respect of her. Next, we should look at his and Carol's existing investments. They each have "roll-over" Tesas, with £18,000 jointly invested in Birmingham Midshires. This means the Braziers can also expect to receive a windfall bonus in due course as Midshires is taken over, possibly by Halifax. Other deposit-based investments include £14,000 in total in Carol's name with Nationwide (postal account) and Woolwich. Perhaps part of this cash could be invested elsewhere.

PEPs have featured strongly in Stephen and Carol's financial planning. In all, they have five different PEPs, with a total initial investment of some £27,000. The first PEP was in a Save & Prosper managed fund, which Stephen doesn't feel has performed well. Gartmore Select Opportunities, a European unit trust, has achieved top quartile performance over one, three and five years. It is an excellent holding for long-term capital growth.

Another of Stephen's European fund selections, Morgan Grenfell



Stephen and Carol Brazier could be in for a windfall Page One

European Growth, has not performed well recently. With little sign of real improvement, consideration needs to be given to switching this to an alternative PEP. Transfers can be carried out without affecting normal annual PEP allowances. For the last tax year they opted for investment trust PEPs and Stephen invested £6,000 in the Henderson Witan: a huge international trust

with a solid record. Carol plumped for the Fleming Smaller Companies Trust, for which the timing looks to be reasonably good. These should both be retained with the aim of achieving long-term capital appreciation.

Stephen is expecting a capital sum of around £50,000 on retirement. Of this, £12,000 is to be used to maximise this final year's PEP allowances.

Stephen has voiced concern about becoming too heavily exposed to equities. One option would be to invest in corporate-bond PEPs, which tend to be less volatile.

Stephen would also like to set aside £14,000 in the new-style Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) for himself and Carol when this new savings vehicle is launched in April 1999. Up to £7,000 can be invested in the first year of each ISA, following which the limit reduces to £5,000. However, it would be imprudent to make specific recommendations so far in advance.

Although Stephen is concerned about short-term price movements as the market continues to reach new record highs, it is important that he does not forget the main objective of share-based investment, which is to achieve long-term capital growth.

To help lower the overall risk of the Braziers' investment portfolio, they should consider a "distribution fund" where, typically, the manager will invest in a combination of blue chip equities and fixed-interest securities. A with-profits bond would also provide a good anchor to the portfolio.

Stephen and Carol benefited in 1997 from free shares in Alliance & Leicester and Woolwich. They should hold on to these while the banking sector continues to drive the stock market's rise.

A further consideration is the education of Stephen's daughter from his first marriage, which will cost around £12,000 over the next four years. This capital must be accessible, safe and not subject to day-to-day volatility. Safe and exciting is hard to achieve but premium bonds might be worth considering. Winnings are tax free and the capital is available within seven days. Who knows, they might just hit the jackpot.

Finally, Stephen has had a bit of a gamble of his own - investing £1,000 in five Japanese guitars. Hardly a standard investment but Stephen confesses that playing his guitar is a touch more interesting than playing the market.

UNDER THE SPOTLIGHT/MIDLAND BANK CAPITAL PROTECTED PEP

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The Deal: Savers worried about the potential risks of stock market investment are being wooed by Midland, which initially offered a choice of two PEPs.

The UK Option closed this week. The International Option,

which is open until 30 April, links returns to the performance of markets in the UK, Europe, Japan and the US.

The exposure is 25 per cent to the UK stock market, plus the same for the S&P 500 in the US and the Japan Nikkei 225. The last 25 per cent is spread between France, Switzerland,

Germany and Holland in roughly equal measures.

After five and a half years, investors receive the full growth of the indices or their money back if they fall. The guarantees are by means of futures and options deals. The opening and closing values of the indices will be averaged, using daily averages

over the first and last six months of the investment period. The PEP qualifies for general and single company purposes, allowing up to £9,000 to be invested, with a minimum set by Midland of £3,000. Plus Points: If you believe world markets are likely to be volatile in the next few years,

guaranteed funds can seem a sensible option.

The averaging of index values is a further "steady Eddie": the potential for dramatic returns is lost, in return for less downside if markets go silly in the first and last six months. Drawbacks and Risks: Using options means the dividend

yield from shares, worth about 1-3 per cent annually, is not added to the final value of the fund. It is impossible to choose when to cash in, such as after a good bull run, or wait to ride out a bear market. Moreover, do you really want to acquire Japanese exposure right now? Marks out of Five: Two

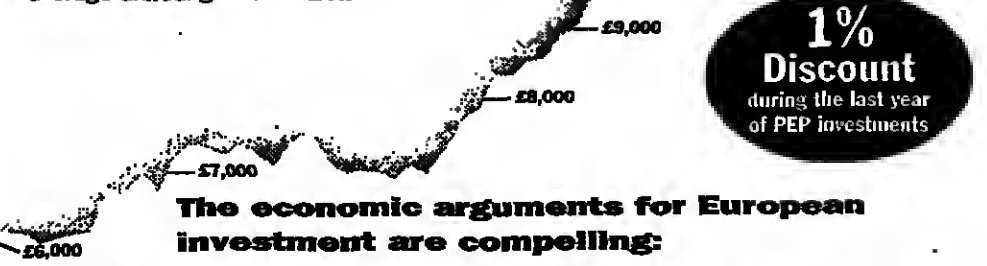
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Rock art on a roll



LSD:
New Wave
posters from
San Francisco
are coming
under the
hammer
for up to
£1,200

New Wave rock concert posters from San Francisco – the latest rock-art investment collectable – are about to surge in price. The punky music may not be new. But the art is. Psychedelia has been superseded by trash new graphics that are a distinctive blend of comic-book cartoon, Hollywood film poster and in-your-face punk.

Posters by the rising New Wave star Alan Forbes, 29, retailed for \$20 six months ago. Now, fresh off the silk-screen presses in the basement of ArtRock, the world's biggest distributor of rock'n'roll art, on the seedy side of San Francisco, the price is \$200. Forbes hand-letters and prints the posters in limited editions of 250 or so, applying up to 11 different-coloured layers of ink. Under "black light" (infra-red) they glow up, seeming to acquire three dimensions – a vestige of psychedelia.

In the American rock industry, New Wave posters have become a currency. Of an edition of 250, the concert promoter and the band usually get 10-20 per cent each, instead of cash, in lieu of logo royalties. The rest are sold by the publisher. The few that are displayed to advertise the gig (newspaper ads do the rest) are usually locked in window displays in record shops.

Squabbling over who should get posters has reached such a pitch that Mark Armistead, another ArtRock artist, is being simultaneously sued by the Dave Matthews Band and Phish for allegedly selling some of the posters he designed for them. In London, Bonhams' Ted Owen is offering

Collect to Invest: never mind the pharmacology, catch the New Wave ahead of the crowd, says John Windsor

15 of Forbes's signed artists' proofs, mostly estimated £150-£250, in his second annual sale of rock posters and original rock art, High Art, on 5 May. He has put an estimate of £200-£300 on Forbes's 11-colour *It All Went South*, advertising an exhibition of his in Los Angeles earlier this year.

The handful of New Wave posters that appeared in Bonhams' first High Art sale, last September, must have mystified British bidders. Only one of nine posters by Frank Kozik, an established New Wave name, found a buyer. Two posters by the artist Coop, top New Wave before Forbes came on the scene, offered in separate lots, were unsold. A third lot by Coop – eight posters – made £483 (estimate £200-£300). The only Forbes lot, 11 posters, fetched £230 (estimate £140-£200). Whoever bought them is unlikely to buy Forbes as cheaply again. Kozik is back in next month's sale – top estimate £800-£1,000.

The V&A is laying in New Wave posters and also British posters by the Hapshash and the Coloured Coat combo – Nigel Waymouth and Michael English. They earned a permanent

place in rock history by designing posters for the UFO Club at the Saville Theatre in Tottenham Court Road, where Pink Floyd and Traffic had their beginnings – and where Jimi Hendrix staged his first big British gig in October 1967.

The Hapshash poster for Hendrix's debut fetched £863 at Bonhams in September against an optimistic estimate of £800-£1,200.

Hapshash poster prices are likely to go on rising (there are 20 or so, estimated around £200, in Bonhams' May sale). In fact, psychedelic posters from both sides of the Atlantic seem under-valued. First printings of historic hippie posters by such big-name artists as Rick Griffin, Victor Moscoso and Stanley Mouse can still be bought at Bonhams for under £200. The bands included the Grateful Dead, the Doors and Jefferson Airplane.

As the debate over legalisation of drugs intensifies, the first psychedelic revival seems all the more imminent. But never mind the pharmacology, look at the art. Cash in on New Wave before the rest do, but for long-term investment put your trust in the freaky world of LSD.

Classic guide to poster editions: *A Collector's Guide to the Numbered Dance Posters, Created For Bill Graham and the Family Dog, 1966-1973* by Eric King, Berkeley: Syuka Press 1980. High Art auction, 5 May (11am), Bonhams, Montpelier Street, London SW7 (0171-393 3900). ArtRock, 115 Mission Street, San Francisco, California 94103, USA

INTERNET INVESTOR

Ten years ago the one pound note ceased to be legal tender, replaced by the one pound coin which, according to some, looks like a refugee from a chocolate money set. Others, grinding a political axe, then called the new coin the "Maggie" because, they said, it was thick, brassy and had pretensions to being a sovereign. Now we stand on the brink of the demise of sterling itself within a few short years as the Government dithers about its commitment to the single European currency.

However, the arguments for and against the euro, which centre on ease of trade across frontiers weighed against loss of sovereignty, may themselves be rendered academic in just a few years. David Errington, the new chief technology officer at Sage, the UK's largest accounting software company, is predicting the demise of money itself by 2010.

He forecasts: "The growth of electronic commerce will



ROBIN AMLOT

eliminate the need to deal with tangible money for business transactions.

"I believe that money, as we know it today, will become redundant by 2010."

Some 300,000 small and medium-sized businesses use Sage's software and there can be no doubt that, if they all migrated their goods and services on to the web, it would significantly change the way the rest of us shopped, worked and played. However, it takes a brave man to claim money will disappear entirely. Cash is far too useful for those people who prefer not to leave a transaction trail.

Nevertheless, electronic banking is one of the fastest-

As more people bank on the net, some firms are banking on a cashless future

growing areas of the on-line world. The Co-operative Bank now offers all its personal current account and credit card customers the option of a full on-line internet banking service. As a come-on, the bank is offering anybody who registers for the service before 30 May the chance to enter a competition with a prize of £5,000-worth of computer equipment vouchers.

Co-op Bank account-holders with net access can run an account on-line incurring no extra charges from the bank, though they will still have to pay normal internet connection fees and phone charges. You can view

account balances and current/historic statement information, transfer funds from one account to another, change standing orders, cancel direct debits and order a cheque book or paying in book, together with other routine transactions.

The Co-op's site was developed using software designed by the German company Brokat. Its on-line transaction technology is now being used by over 1,400 banks, discount brokers, insurance companies and investment firms. The security system requires you to register a security pass code and secure personal information (SPI) with the Bank via a free telephone call before using the service for the first time.

The SPI will be five pieces of memorable information, such as names and dates which only you would be able to know. Internet users will be asked to confirm any one of the five SPI items plus their security pass code. Failure to

do so aborts the internet access and you will be asked to contact the bank by telephone.

Co-op also has plans to introduce a palm-top version of its net banking site, which should be available within the next month or so. The bank appears committed to staying at the forefront of consumer technological choice. It may prove to be a wise business decision in the face of a coming upheaval in banking. US banks now count their customer base in the tens and hundreds of millions in the wake of recent mega deals. The round of takeovers and mergers may soon be reflected among Britain's banks.

However, the excitement in the financial sector has

brought a potential problem of its own as a result of soaring share prices. The New York Stock Exchange's Dow Jones Industrial Average index has traded into record territory well above the 9,000 level and the more optimistic analysts are now forecasting further records above 10,000 by the end of the year. Yet, if this does happen, some of the computer systems used on Wall Street may have the software equivalent of hysterics, since they were designed with the assumption that the index would always be a four-figure number!

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**BRIAN
TORA**

Banking on mega-mergers

It is easy to dislike banks. Large, impersonal, for ever bearing down on the small customer - I doubt there are many of us who have not had reason to complain about the level of service received from their bank at some time.

Well, banks are in the news at present. And it looks likely that some will not be around for much longer. In the past, they have been a protected species. The Glass Steagall Act in the US limited how banks could operate. This legislation could be challenged in Congress later this year.

On Wall Street, bank mergers have been making big news. Bank of America is getting together with NationsBank while First Chicago is beating a path to the altar with BancOne, continuing the consolidation of US banking that is expected to be repeated here. The Citicorp and Travelers Group deal is in another league entirely, though.

Citicorp, as the most massive combine is to be unimaginatively named, represents the new face of global financial services. One stop financial shopping world-wide is the aim. One hundred million customers from 100 countries is just the starting point.

There must be plenty of competitors who will not wish to be left behind. In the US, speculation is rife that this is the first of a whole series of marriages which will change the face of international banking. Here in the UK, the flurry of excitement was more short-lived. Some larger banks, like HSBC, attracted investor attention as analysts sought to determine which might form part of new global groupings. It did not last for long, though. Even more surprisingly, there was no knock-on effect to send shares of smaller banks skyward.

I find the market's muted reaction surprisingly mature. After all, what contribution can Northern Rock or Alliance & Leicester make in the global market place? Some consolidation in our crowded banking sector must be inevitable, but it seems the markets could not find any enthusiasm for copying the American fashion of target spotting.

From a fundamental view, this reflects the more difficult conditions that exist in UK banking. Margins on mortgage lending have fallen steadily, which will effect profitability. Moreover, as a colleague of mine remarked this week, you should never underestimate banks' ability to unearth a disaster from somewhere, even when things are going well. The lack of froth in markets suggest investors are worried about valuation levels. A report earlier this week claimed that mutual fund purchases by individuals were at an all time high, both here and the US. It could be a case of Joe Public getting in at the top again.

In the meantime, Birmingham Midshires is toying with the idea of floating on the stock market to solve the apparent dilemma of Halifax offering a cool £150m more than Royal Bank of Scotland, but it is hard to imagine an independent Birmingham Midshires being worth as much as Halifax is prepared to pay.

Cost cutting and rationalisation must deliver a better return to Halifax than even Royal Bank of Scotland could achieve - and some of that cost cutting will probably include the Birmingham Midshires' board of directors. Flotation must be looking pretty attractive from a Midlands perspective.

Brian Tora is the chairman of the Greig Middleton investment strategy committee.

BEST BORROWING RATES

Telephone	% Rate and period	Min. adv %	Inc.
MORTGAGES			
FIXED RATES			
Scotcharrow BS	0250 138149	0.05% for 1 year	95%
Principality BS	0800 163817	5.49% to 20.01	95%
Northern Rock	0445 625 0500	5.99% to 13.00	95%
VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES			
Horsley & Pugsley BS	0800 774499	0.10% for 1 year	95%
Principality BS	0800 686086	4.44% to 20.00	95%
Northern Rock	0445 625 0500	5.05% to 13.01	95%
FIRST TIME BUYERS FIXED RATES			
Northern Rock	0445 625 0500	3.99% to 13.00	95%
Halifax	0800 101110	5.75% to 31.01	95%
Northern Rock	0800 332010	6.10% for 1 year	95%
FIRST TIME BUYERS VARIABLE DISCOUNTED RATES			
Woodfin	0645 757575	5.70% for 1 year	95%
Northern Rock	0800 686086	5.50% to 20.00	95%
Northern Rock	0800 332010	6.05% for 1 year	95%
UNSECURED PERSONAL LOANS			
UNSECURED			
Northern Rock	0345 421421	9.9% H	12.5%
Yorkshire Bank	0800 202122	12.5% A	12.5%
Direct Line	0181 680 9966	12.5% A	12.5%
SECURED LOANS (SECOND CHARGE)			
Oysterville Bank	0800 240024	9.7%	Reg
Royal Bank of Scotland	0800 121121	10.7%	Reg
First Direct	0545 109103	11.2%	Reg
OVERDRAFTS			
Albion & Lancaster	0500 959595	Advance	0.85%
Bank of Scotland	0800 804040	Direct charge	11.0%
Northern Rock	0445 625 0500	Penetration	0.97%
CREDIT CARDS			
Capital One Bank	0800 888000	Visa	0.55% to 6.50%
RBS Advance	0800 877770	Visa	0.55% to 6.50%
Co-operative Bank	0800 100000	Advance VISA	0.55% to 6.50%
BUILD CARDS			
Capital One Bank	0800 888000	VISA	0.55% to 6.50%
Co-operative Bank	0800 877770	VISA	0.55% to 6.50%
RBS Advance	0800 877770	VISA	0.55% to 6.50%
STORE CARDS			
John Lewis	Via store	1.25%	18.0%
John Lewis	Via store	1.25%	18.0%
John Lewis	Via store	1.25%	18.0%

BEST SAVINGS RATES

Telephone	Account	Mode of term	Deposit	Rate	Interest
INSTANT ACCESS					
Cheltenham BS	0800 445255	Savings	Instant	5.12%	Day
Woodfin	0645 757575	Card Saver	Instant	5.00%	Year
Northern Rock	0800 332010	Direct Saver	Instant	5.00%	Year
Leeds & Halifax BS	0445 625 0500	Direct Saver	Instant	5.00%	Year
INSTANT ACCESS POSTAL ACCOUNTS					
Standard Life Bank	0245 555557	Direct Access	Instant	5.00%	Year
Scottish Widows Bank	0800 332010	Direct Access	Instant	5.00%	Year
Safeway	0800 332010	Direct Access	Instant	5.00%	Year
Northern Rock	0445 625 0500	Direct Access	Instant	5.00%	Year
NOTICE ACCOUNTS & BONDS					
Scotcharrow BS	0250 138149	Scotcharrow 30	30 Day	5.12%	Year
Stewart & Gordon	0345 255255	Direct Thrift	30 Day	5.00%	Year
Legal & General Bank	0800 111100	60 Direct Plan	60 Day	5.00%	Year
Investment Bank (UK)	0171 303 1850	Direct Plan	1 Year	5.00%	Year
CHEQUE ACCOUNTS					
Investment Bank (UK)	0171 303 1850	Direct Plan	Instant	5.00%	Year
Halifax	0800 332010	Direct Plan	Instant	5.00%	Year
Cheltenham BS	0800 445255	Direct Plan	Instant	5.00%	Year
Leeds & Halifax BS	0445 625 0500	Direct Plan	Instant	5.00%	Year
FIXED RATE BONDS					
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 372222	Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 372222	Fixed Rate Bond	2 Year	5.00%	Year
Portsmouth BS	0800 807080	Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	5.00%	Year
First Direct	0545 109103	Fixed Rate Bond	1 Year	5.00%	Year
FIRST TESSAS					
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 372222	First Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Standard Life Bank	0245 555557	First Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Darlington BS	01423 242424	First Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
San Bank Corp	01423 242424	First Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
FOLLOW-ON TESSAS					
Standard Life Bank	0245 555557	Follow-on Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
San Bank Corp	01423 242424	Follow-on Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Norwich & Peterborough	01733 372222	Follow-on Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
Britannia BS	0800 132304	Follow-on Tessa	1 Year	5.00%	Year
GUARANTEED INCOME BONDS (net)					
GE Financial Assurance	0161 380 3388	Guaranteed Income Bond	1 Year	5.00%	Year
GE Financial Assurance	0161 380 3388	Guaranteed Income Bond	2 Year	5.00%	Year
ITV London & Eilat	01903 828282	Guaranteed Income Bond	3 Year	5.00%	Year
ITV London & Eilat	01903 828282	Guaranteed Income Bond	4 Year	5.00%	Year
ITV London & Eilat	01903 828282	Guaranteed Income Bond	5 Year	5.00%	Year
OFFSHORE ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Bank of Scotland	0800 804040	Capital West Direct	Instant	5.00%	Year
First National UK	01423 242424	Capital West Direct	Instant	5.00%	Year
First National UK	01423 242424	Capital West Direct	Instant	5.00%	Year
NATIONAL SAVINGS ACCOUNTS (gross)					
Investment Accounts					
1 Month	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
2 Year	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
3 Year	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
4 Year	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%
5 Year	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%	5.00%

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5/PERSONAL FINANCE

THE INDEPENDENT
SATURDAY 15 APRIL 1998



THE JONATHAN DAVIS COLUMN

It is now several years since the authors of *In Search of Excellence* elevated the slogan "Keep it simple, stupid" into one of the management catch phrases of the 1980s. The rest of the book's recipes for success may long since have gone the way of all management fads but I have not yet met a successful businessman who did not in practice observe the dictates of that one powerful command. The clear lesson of history is that, in a complex world, you overcomplicate at your peril. The more I study the techniques of

successful investors, the more convinced I become that the same command should be the watchword of anyone who wants to make the most of their money as well. Those who make the best investors are, by and large, the ones who have the greatest ability to see through all the noise and distractions of the day's activity in the markets and hold firm to a few, well-tried, common-sense precepts.

I was interested, therefore, to read this week a speech given by John Bogle, the founder of the Vanguard group, on this very theme of simplicity in investing. Vanguard, you may recall, is a mutually owned American fund management group which pioneered the spread of index tracking and other low-cost mutual funds in the United States.

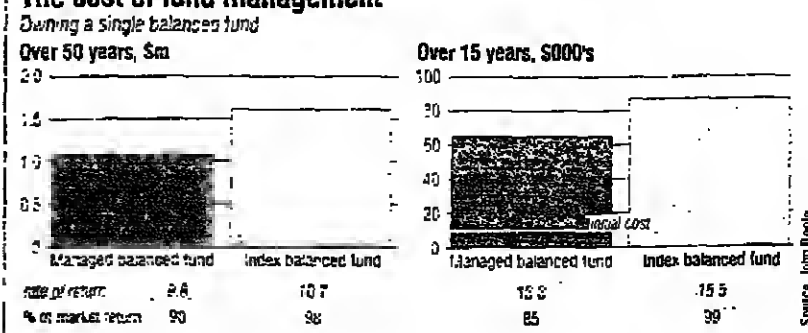
Being outspoken and prone to telling his peers a few home truths about the way they do business, Mr Bogle is not always flavour of the month in the mutual fund industry. However, what he has to say to ordinary investors about the stock market is so long on common sense – and also so straightforward – that I make no apology for passing on some more of his advice. (I hasten to add that I have no vested interest in promoting Vanguard itself. If other fund managers chose to speak as much sense, their views

would be just as greatly appreciated.) The first and most important "simple truth" that investors need to appreciate, Mr Bogle says, is the need to define their objectives realistically. They should start by accepting that they are not going to capture all the rewards of the asset class they have chosen to invest in (be that cash, bonds, property or the stock market). If you invest in a building society, you know you are not going to get the best money market rates.

Yet the same goes for shares: on average, you cannot expect to do as well as the stock market averages. The buying and selling costs and the charges levied by fund managers (if you use one) will inevitably see to that. What most investors should do, therefore, is start by aiming for something lower but more realistic – which is to capture as much of the potential return of the asset class they are in as they can.

If you accept that premise, index tracking funds are the logical starting place. The graphs show how that difference expresses itself over different lengths of time. A typical actively managed balanced mutual fund has captured 90 per cent of the market's returns over the past 50 years; a comparable low-cost tracker fund (with

The cost of fund management



the same split between equities and bonds) would have captured 98 per cent of the potential return.

Over the last 15 years, the disparity is greater still: the average actively managed fund has captured 85 per cent of the market's returns, against the average index tracking fund's 99 per cent. (The reason the gap between the two classes is wider in the shorter period is that the average cost deducted as a fee by fund management companies has gone up in the last 15 years.)

Because of our old friend compound interest, the difference that makes to the value of the fund at the end of the

period is striking. Suppose your original investment was £10,000; the value of the fund at the end of the period would be £500,000 more if you succeeded in capturing the extra 8 per cent of the market's performance over that time. Over the past 15 years, the difference in the final value of your £10,000 investment would have come to around £21,000, or double your initial investment.

So tracking should be at the core of your strategy. Human nature being what it is, however, even Mr Bogle sensibly concedes that most people will not want to settle for such a dull but worthy objective alone. They will hold fast to

the notion that they may be the fortunate ones who can distinguish the best performing funds from the worst (and there are a minority of funds which do consistently outperform, if you know how to find them).

If you are one of those investors, I can only urge you to consider carefully the rest of Mr Bogle's advice. His first rule is: when in doubt, go for a low-cost fund over a more expensive one. Next, prefer those funds which have a low turnover rate of holdings: the lower the turnover, the lower the transaction costs you incur. (According to Vanguard, the turnover rate in US mutual funds has risen three-fold since the early 1990s.) Then, aim to buy directly if you can, avoiding sales commission to advisers.

When it comes to performance figures, treat all past performance statistics with healthy scepticism. Go for a consistently above average performer rather than an occasional top 10 appearance. Beware of star names – they are easy to identify in retrospect, but rarely in advance. Once you have made a well-researched choice, stick with the decision: don't chop and change. Finally, don't own too many different funds – after three or four, you are getting no additional diversification benefits.

UNDERSTANDING THE STOCK MARKET: JOHN ANDREW

Some profitable reading

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Mankind has always had a healthy appetite for news. In the financial world, news is always eagerly digested and analysed. It is very important as the prices of stocks and shares respond both upwards and downwards to information, rumours and opinions.

It is by being informed that investors are able to enhance their prospects of making money. It is not just new opportunities that you should be on the look out for, but also any developments relating to companies in which you have shares.

Even when a company is doing well, stockbrokers may recommend selling its shares purely because they consider investors could do even better by investing in one of its rivals. Other reasons for selling include poor prospects because of mismanagement, a decline in the demand for the goods produced, increased competition in the industry or simply because its share price has risen higher than its future prospects suggest is a sensible level.

Analysts at stockbrokers, of course, spend all their time researching companies' progress. They attend presentations given by the organisations and can ask directors and executives questions. They not only analyse a company's results in a depth, but they monitor the markets companies operate in and look at the effect of economic indicators on individual organisations.

So, what can we do as small shareholders? Let us start with monitoring the price of the shares we hold. You can check prices each morning in *The Independent's* shares page. However, remember that these are a snap shot at a particular moment in time – at the close of business on the previous working day. Share prices fluctuate constantly throughout a trading day.

You can use *The Independent's* Teleshare service to obtain the current price. Details of how this operates and the charges are on the shares page. Alternatively, you can access one of the TV text services, where share prices are updated several times a day.

Derek Pain's Market Report, which features on our shares page, is an excellent place to get an overall daily view of the mar-



Top tips: market reports in the press give a daily view of the City

ket. Written in an easy to read, yet informative style, it is not just concerned with what has happened. It also includes *Taking Stock*, a column which includes useful snippets that could reveal an opportunity you may like to explore further.

Both TV and radio have slots which are good for general updates on UK business news, international market reports and news stories. For early birds there is *Business Breakfast* at 6am on BBC1 Monday through to Friday. Business news also features throughout the day during the regular news programmes on both radio and on TV.

Then there are specialist publications. *The Investors' Chronicle* contains buy and sell tips; a summary of brokers' recommendations; a brief analysis of results; a market view and a range of features covering everything from personal finance to traded options. It is published each Friday at £2.50. Annual subscriptions cost £12, but look out for special offers if you decide to subscribe.

If your interests are in unit and investment trusts, there are also monthly per-

sonal finance magazines worth considering, for example, *Personal Finance* (£2.60); *Bloomberg Money* (£2.95); *Moneywise* (£2.70); *What Investment* (£2.75) and *Money Management* (£5.50).

Then, of course, there are commercial investment newsletters too numerous to list here. You will have no trouble finding their advertisements in the financial press. However, remember that no tip is infallible. Use any tip, wherever it is published, as a guide and do your own research.

Also, be aware that one stockbroker's "buy" can be another broker's "sell" the next week. Needless to say, you will have to make up your own mind as to whom to follow, as it is not prudent to change strategy on a regular basis. As the saying goes: "A rolling stone gathers no moss."

For a copy of the ProShare 'Investor Update: Where to Get Share Information' send a stamped addressed envelope to: ProShare Investor Updates, 13-14 Basinghall Street, London EC2N 5BQ.

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University challenge

A levels are only one of the hurdles facing students wanting to go to college, writes Tony Lyons

I consider myself one of the lucky ones. Many years ago, I decided to go to university and get a degree. Coming from a home where there was little money did not worry me as I was able to get a full student grant from my local authority. While not enough to pay for a riotous time of good living and sheer swilling, it did at least provide enough to cover my basic needs of food and lodgings, with the odd pound or two left over for a cheap night out.

Nowadays, matters are very different. The last thing students need to have on their minds as they revise for A levels is worrying about how they will be able to survive if they do well and go on to a place at university.

Yet a high proportion of the 800,000-plus expected to go into higher education this autumn will be unprepared for the costs involved. Latest estimates are that it will cost around £15,000 to £18,000 per child for the three years they will be studying for a degree. If they go to a Scottish university, where many of the courses take four years, it can cost a third more. On top of this, there will also be tuition fees and most universities and colleges will charge the full £1,000 a year.

The maximum grant has been fixed for a number of years at £1,855 outside

London and at £2,340 in London for students living away from home. Fewer and fewer students qualify for any grant, let alone the full amount. If their parents have a joint income of over £16,050, the grant is reduced. Earn more than £32,500 after allowances and they will get no grant at all. Under a quarter of last year's student intake received a full grant while as many as one-third got nothing at all.

There are special student loans available. But even borrowing the maximum will not make up the shortfall that the student needs to live on. Banks and building societies are keen to offer students "cheap" overdrafts. Typical is Halifax, which permits them to have "interest-free" overdrafts up to £500 in the first year, £750 in the second, and £1,000 in the third. But the loans have to be repaid after they qualify.

If the student is going to Liverpool or one of the other cheaper university towns, the National Union of Students estimates that they will need at least £4,300 a year for reasonable expenditure, board, lodgings and books. More expensive towns will cost at least another £1,000 a year.

Most parents have to contribute to student expenses out of income as too few think to start a savings plan early



Degrees in debt: students will need at least £4,300 a year for reasonable expenditure

enough to pay for higher education. This can put a hefty dent in the wage packet. There are ways of reducing the impact but none is cheap.

If there is sufficient free capital value in the house, it can be used to raise a first or second mortgage. Some institutions offer special deals on money borrowed to pay for education.

A personal loan is another possibility. But this is relatively expensive, with most high street banks charging at least 18 per cent in interest rates.

An alternative for those with gold credit cards is to use the low-cost loans that some offer. These cards are

usually available only to those earning over £20,000 a year.

If you have a with-profits endowment policy, money can be borrowed from your insurance company. Most insurers offer loans at reasonable rates, with the capital being repaid out of the policy's maturity value.

If you are looking a year or two ahead, it is not too late to start saving for university education. There are a couple of tax-efficient ways of building up a lump sum that will pay some, if not all, of the costs of college.

These can include national savings, where money can be saved tax free. You

could make use of personal equity plans (PEPs) while you can, and Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs), when they start next April. However, share prices can fall as well as go up.

Alternatively, an offshore roll-up fund can be opened in the child's name. When he or she reaches 18 and goes on to university, the proceeds can be used to provide for their needs. Either regular savings or a lump sum can be invested. Income is rolled up gross of tax. When the child receives the returns, as they are unlikely to be earning enough to be liable for income tax, they will be tax free.

A crash course in raising funds to meet the costs of learning

The sooner you can start saving for your child's education the better. But if you did not plan ahead don't despair. There are a number of ways you may be able to meet the costs.

The first thing to remember is that you will not have the full education costs up front. Fees are usually due at the beginning of each term, so high earners may even be able to pay them out of their salaries. And even if your pay will not stretch to the full amount, you may be able to cover some of it out of your normal income.

It may also be possible to increase your income. If only one partner is working, the other may be able to re-

turn to work and boost the family income. Another possibility is to rent out a spare room. Under the rent a room scheme, you can let a room in your home and, providing the income is no more than £4,250 a year, it is tax free and does not even have to appear on your tax return. For more information, ask your local tax office for Inland Revenue leaflet IR87.

Another way you may be able to increase your income, suggests Edward Creasey, an independent financial adviser at Clark Conway, is through existing investments. "See if you can utilise any to provide you with an income. Personal equity plan (PEP) investors may be able to switch into income producing funds which would help them meet the costs of education. But be very wary about cashing in any investments," he says.

Only if you do not have sufficient income or investments to cover school fees, should you consider borrowing. Often it is possible to borrow against

a with-profits life assurance policy. As you do not have to cash it in, the policy will continue to grow in value and you will not lose out on any terminal bonus.

If your insurer will not lend against your policy you could try Scottish Widows Bank. It will lend against the policies of 36 insurance companies. The bank will lend up to 75 per cent of the surrender value, charging a competitive 3 per cent above base rate.

If you own or are buying your home, you could look to borrow against it. If you have a mortgage, see if your lender will give you a further advance. Or you could consider remortgaging altogether, suggests Simon

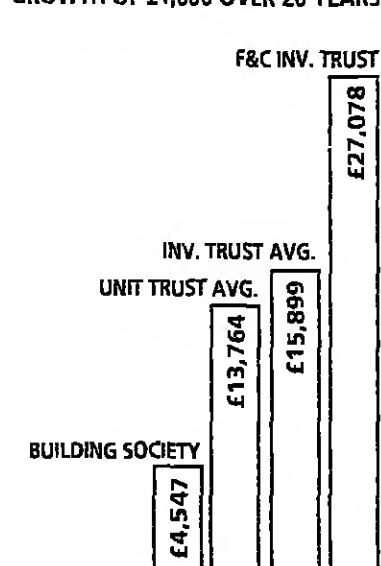
Tyler, managing director of Chase de Vere Mortgage Management. He points out that remortgaging and borrowing, say, an extra £20,000 could be cheaper than sticking with your existing lender.

Another option worth considering is one of the new flexible mortgages. These vary, but those offering a cheque book facility and drawdown option, such as Bank of Scotland's Mortgage Trust's and Scottish Widows Bank's, may be the answer.

If you don't own your home you could look at personal loans. But do shop around and compare interest rates as they vary enormously.

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From the cradle to the graduation ceremony: how to get an early advantage

Education is an expensive business. If you have good state schools where you live, you are lucky. Most parents wanting their children to have the best education will think of sending them to a private school but, unless they have very high earnings, that means saving for education as soon as possible.

"Early planning is the key," stresses Simon Holt, managing director of Skipton Financial Services, an independent financial adviser. "But, sadly, many parents flushed with the pride of parenthood and wanting to do their best for their children

Parents need to plan ahead for fees, warns Simon Read

find the costs of saving out of income are at odds with the expense a new child brings along."

According to the specialist advisers, School Fees Associated, paying for an 11-year-old at an average school for seven years is likely to cost £50,000 to £60,000. According to Skipton Financial Services, typical day fees at a non-boarding senior school are at least £1,000 a term, with top schools

charging much more. Prep schools can be £800 a term upwards. Boarding schools start at around £2,500 a term.

So what kind of savings should parents be considering now? Mr Holt suggests tax-exempt special savings accounts (Tessas), personal equity plans (PEPs) and the new Individual Savings Accounts (ISAs) when they come along next year. "PEPs carry higher risks than deposits, but long-term

the rewards should be better," he says. "Lower-risk PEPs could include the GT Income PEP. For those attracted to higher-risk foreign markets, Fidelity's Triple Performance PEP could be an answer."

However, worries about the high level of equity markets at home and news of crashing economies in the Far East may encourage parents to consider less risky options like Tessas or other building society savings accounts.

An insurance company savings plan, the endowment policy, is much less flexible but

can offer better returns than simple deposit accounts. Mr Holt suggests a with-profits or unit-linked plan from a reputable company such as Standard Life. "These plans can be tailored to mature when school fees are expected to fall due," he says.

A drawback with endowment plans is that they should be kept up for their full period to get the best value out of them. So if you change your mind about education for your child, you should continue paying premiums until the pre-set maturity date or you could lose a lot of your investment.

"As in most long-term planning processes, a balance of products is likely to be best," advises Mr Holt. He suggests three factors should be considered when making financial plans: the state of parents' existing finances; when fees are likely to be needed and how much risk the parents want to take with the underlying investments used to fund the cost.

An independent financial adviser will be able to assist you through the planning process and make appropriate recommendations.

Scholarship schemes

Private schools are looking at ways to replace the loss of assisted places.
By Richard Shackleton

Scarcely has an election pledge been honoured so quickly. Within weeks of winning last May's general election Labour moved on its manifesto commitment to end "assisted places" in the independent education sector. An emergency bill was rushed through Parliament to abolish the scheme, which helps pay up to £10,000 of the fees for bright children from modest backgrounds to attend otherwise unaffordable private schools.

Despite protests and a court challenge, ministers have agreed to continue funding for existing secondary school pupils until they finish sixth form at 18. But those in preparatory schools must leave the scheme before transferring to secondary education.

Withdrawal of the scheme has forced the independent schools sector into feverish activity. Head teachers are looking to set up their own assisted-places schemes, releasing resources from long dormant endowments and establishing fund-raising campaigns. They are worried that unless they continue to attract the clever pupils who win assisted places, they will tumble down the academic league tables as they become more socially exclusive.

Manchester Grammar School is setting up a £10m foundation to support more than 300 pupils - the number at present winning government-assisted places at the school. Monmouth School and Monmouth School for Girls, run by the Haberdashers' Company, have raised a £42m fund to pay for 212 assisted places - costing £1m a year - by selling property left to them in 1614. Most ambitious



King's scholarships have been offered at Eton since 1440
Photograph: Peter Marchand

for children of former pupils. Had Tony Blair wanted to send a son to his old school, Fettes College in Edinburgh, he could have hoped for a Todd scholarship, which is for children of Old Fettesians. Others reserve scholarships or exhibitions for children of the clergy or members of the armed forces.

There are also scholarships reserved for children from certain regions. Keil School in Dumfries offers Foundation bursaries to pupils in the "counties of benefit": Argyll, Bute, Inverness, Ross and Cromarty, and Sutherland. Clifton College in Bristol offers a scholarship to children of newspaper journalists who work in Avon, Gloucestershire, Somerset, Wiltshire or Dorset.

There are also many scholarships for children who are gifted in non-academic pursuits - art, drama, music and sport. Several schools offer the new breed of so-called "all-rounder" scholarships, including Downside School, Millfield School and Uppingham.

of all, the Girls' Public Day School Trust has launched a £70m scholarship scheme to save all 3,000 of its assisted places.

In the long run, according to the Headmasters' and Headmistresses' Conference (HMC), which represents the top public schools, some 10,000 scholarships will be available to children from underprivileged families.

Meanwhile, schools are preserving, even augmenting, the number and variety of scholarships awarded purely on merit. Most scholarships are academic, and most are awarded on the basis of achievement in a school's own entrance

examination or, in the case of HMC schools, in special scholarship examinations taken in February, March or May. Most offer up to 50 per cent off the school's fees, conforming to a gentleman's agreement designed to stop rich schools poaching the best pupils.

Beyond this, there is an infinite variety of scholarships. Some date back centuries. King's scholarships at Eton have been offered since the college's foundation by Henry VI in 1440. Others are "closed" - as opposed to "open" - and limited to certain categories of pupil. Several schools reserve scholarships

Useful contacts: Independent Schools Information Service: 56, Buckingham Gate, London SW1. Telephone: 0171-630 8793. ISIS also offers a search facility on its website: "www.isis.org.uk".

For the annual guide "Music Awards at Independent Schools": The Music Masters and Mistresses Association, Three Ways, Chicks Lane, Kilmington, Cranbrook, Kent. Telephone: 01892 890537.

For details of places for choristers at choir schools: The Choir Schools Association, The Minster School, Deangate, York YO1 2JA. Telephone: 01904 625217.

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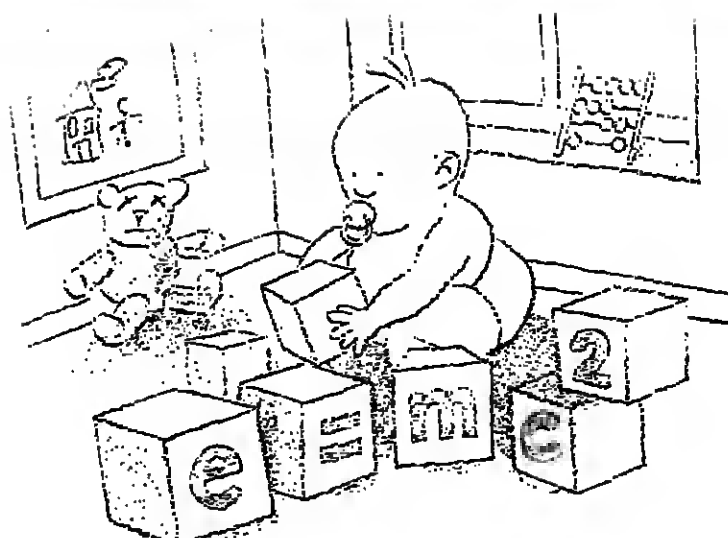
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GAVIN GREEN

Now that the "new" Volkswagen Beetle has been warmly welcomed by the press and (far more important to VW) firmly embraced by customers, comes news of another "retro" car. Citroën has recently confirmed that it will make a "new" 2CV.

This trend to recreate characterful old cars (and watch the showrooms fill) is all part of the motor car's progression from a mere appliance to an emotionally attractive object. Nowadays, we affluent Westerners don't buy cars on sensible, economical, get-you-from-A-to-B grounds. We buy cars which make us feel good. That's why car ads now have no product information, and dish out feel-good images which make me puke but which, apparently, make other motorists come over all emotional and rush down to their dealers, chequebook in hand.

Renault recently did some research with Clio owners, asking them to describe their cars. Instead of putting "four-wheeled metal box with fabric seats and a four-cylinder engine driving the front wheels through a five-speed synchromesh gearbox" most Clio owners described their cars as being "feminine, sexy, young, carefree and slightly unorthodox." They were actually describing Nicole, the girl in the Renault ads, not a small Renault car, but the subtle differences between a headstrong, sexy French teenager and a mass-produced car apparently eluded most owners.

The emotional hugeness is even greater with a retro car. It has to be after all, there is absolutely no sensible reason to buy one. A new Beetle is just the latest Golf with a new body - and less headroom and a smaller boot and a higher price tag. But because it looks cute and reminds people of a car that was thought to have personality (never mind that it was conceived by Hitler), people love it and use all sorts of animate qualities to describe it. If you believe most of the market research descriptions of the new Beetle (cheeky, rebellious, friendly, cuddly, lovable, to quote just some of the eulogies), the car clearly has more personality than most of its owners. Whether this says more about late 20th century man, or more about late 20th century cars, is a moot point.

To be frank, the old Beetle didn't make much sense towards the end of its days either. The only reason it sold in vast quantities was because, up until the early Seventies, there was no other tolerably reliable small car - not when rivals included Minis, small Fiats and small Renaults. The Beetle got squashed when the Japanese arrived with the Honda Civic and Toyota Corolla and when Yanks, in particular, realised that you didn't have to put up with dodgy handling and no performance (the Beetle) or appalling reliability and rust in small cars (Mini, Renaults and Fiats). The Beetle has resurfaced as the Yanks (ire of "me-too" looking Japanese cars and want something different.

Not much is known about Citroën's new 2CV, other than that it will probably share mechanicals with the upcoming Peugeot 207 hatchback (successor to the 205, and due to be unveiled this October) and that it will feature a high, rounded roll-back roof, a la original. It's due to hit the streets in 2000.

Although it may be faithful to the old *Deux Chevaux* in appearance, it is a million miles away in concept. The first 2CV was conceived as a cheap, classless car, designed to accommodate gentlemen wearing top-hats (thus the high headroom) and rural peasants (thus the pliant suspension, which was capable of traversing a ploughed field without breaking a crate of eggs). As it aged, and became increasingly dynamically hopeless, so it became transmogrified (in marketing, if not mechanicals) into a trendy, liberal, attractively subversive conveyance.

Amazingly, Citroën thinks it can reinvent the 2CV's image all over again. Its upcoming, distinctively styled new model will be aimed at trendy young urbanites. Given the power of effective car marketing, this sounds eminently plausible. Which just goes to show that the real powerhouses at car companies these days aren't the engineers and designers, who conceive the cars. Rather, they are the marketing departments, who conceive the publicity campaigns.

Hatchback to the future

Road test Vauxhall Astra 1.8 CDX, by John Simister

Most drivers don't enjoy driving much. You can tell by the cars they choose. Get the gadgets right, and the safety features too - Ford and Vauxhall - well. Then Ford's Mondeo arrived to set a new agenda, to show that the future lay with letting engineers take back control of car design from the accountants. It became a case of "How good can we afford to make it?" Instead of "How little can we get away with spending?"

Since then, every Ford has been fun to drive, comparable with Peugeots, Renaults, Volkswagens and Fiats. It's the new norm, but Vauxhall has been excluded from the party - until the new Astra came along.

This has a suspension system designed to make the car an engaging companion on a twisty road and a comfortable one over urban roadworks, instead of existing solely to stop the car's underbody from scraping along the ground. It makes much use of lightweight aluminium and plastic instead of heavyweight steel, and it has been part-developed by sports-car maker

er and engineering consultant Lotus. No longer do you feel shudders over bumps as though the tyres were made of concrete, no longer does the steering wheel feel as though connected to the front wheels through the medium of rubber bands.

From one of the dullest-driving hatchbacks you could buy, the Astra has become one of the more invigorating. Formerly a car whose loose, clunky controls swallowed up all attempts at driving finesse in a tactile fog, a car in which it made no difference whether you drove it well or badly, it is now an instrument of fair interaction, precision and pleasure. The transformation is remarkable.

It looks quite different, too. We're back to the chunkiness of earlier Astras, but this time with a vertical edge to the rear side window. This, with the very laid-back windscreen and the long wheelbase, makes the Astra look as though it's moving fast and the mass has become squeezed towards the back of the car with the speed. Unfortunately, there's no such dynamism to be found inside. The last Astra had an

airy cabin with an interesting curvy dashboard that was very Vauxhall; this one is gloomy, its dashboard is featureless and cliff-like, the textures of the plastics feel cheap, and the hits don't fit together very well. Compared with the new Golf's excellent interior, it's a disappointment.

It is roomy, though: there's more space in here than in some cars the next size class up. And, in the range-topping and rather expensive 1.8 CDX version I have been testing (there's a 1.2, a 1.4, two 1.6s and a pair of turbodiesels beneath it), the equipment list is long enough to keep the most determined of status-seekers happy. It has air-conditioning, front electric windows (and blanks for the missing electric rear windows - so much for being top-of-the-range), a trip computer, alloy wheels, stereo controls on the steering wheel, and a fine complement of safety equipment including side airbags.

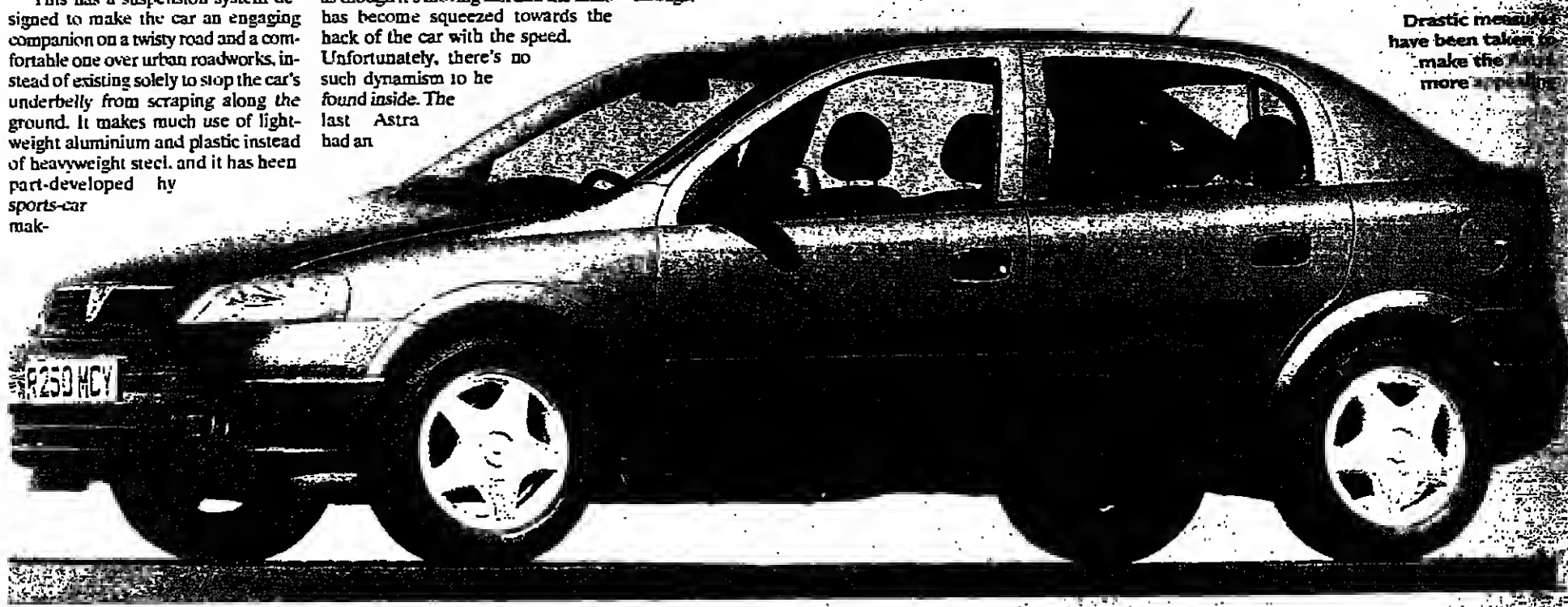
three three-point rear belts, anti-lock brakes and anti-slip traction control.

This 1.8 is a rapid car, capable of a remarkable 125mph and eager to accelerate right across the speed range thanks to its variable-resonance intake system.

And although the engine still has a characteristic Vauxhall sound, it's very quiet with no boom or buzz. The gear change is much improved, too, fake wood gear knob notwithstanding, but fast upward gear changes are hindered by the engine's reluctance to lose speed the moment you ease off the accelerator. The brakes are over-sensitive at low speeds, too.

Overall, though, this is a fine effort. Drastic measures were needed to make the Astra appealing, and they have been taken. It used to be hard to drive an Astra and come across as someone of automotive taste. Now, it's feasible.

Vauxhall Astra 1.8 CDX:
£15,995.
Engine: 1,796cc, four cylinders, 16 valves, 115bhp at 5,400rpm. Five-speed gearbox, front-wheel drive.
Performance: top speed 125mph, 0-60 in 9.2sec, 31-36mpg.
Rivals
Citroën Xsara 1.8 Exclusive: £15,400. Unmemorable styling undercuts a quick, responsive, entertaining and comfortable car. Less space, more driver appeal.
Ford Escort 1.8 Ghia: £14,135. Late-life makeover three years ago salvaged a seemingly hopeless case. Good value, replaced by mad-looking Focus in autumn.
Peugeot 306 1.8 GLX: £14,540. All the Xsara's attributes in a prettier package, except that it's not quite as lively.
Volkswagen Golf 1.6 SE: £14,820. Best-built hatchback, oozes quality, not as much fun to drive as Astra and French rivals.



Drastic measures have been taken to make the Astra more appealing

Hands up if you use your mobile in the car

Aren't mobile phones great? They allow you to talk to whoever you want from wherever you want, whenever you want and vice versa. Communicating has never been easier for the 8.5 million users in the UK. It may be a bit too easy.

Some users take the "mobile" a bit too literally. Never mind making inappropriate and indiscreet calls on the bus or train. They believe that holding the mobile in one hand and steering with the other is OK. It's downright dangerous and actually illegal.

The Road Safety Minister, Baroness Hayman, recently reminded us of the perils of making an in-car call: "Driving whilst using a hand-held mobile phone could cost lives. Drivers must be in full control of their

What do you do in yours? Keep your mitts on the wheel, urges James Ruppert

vehicles to ensure the safety of themselves, their passengers and other road users."

She also suggested that even making a hands-free phone call ought to be discouraged: "It is safer not to use any type of phone when driving, conversations on hands-free phones could distract your attention from the road. Our advice is to use a messaging service and take regular breaks to make

those essential calls." On that basis, in-car conversations with passengers ought to be banned - and listening to a particularly rousing classical CD, or suspenseful spoken-word cassette will soon be the subject of legislation. For the moment, though, we don't need to be nannied because it is still legal for motorists to make calls using a hands-free system, and all for considerably less than the cost of a prang.

The reason for Baroness Hayman's pronouncements is the launch of national newspaper ads with images of a crash scene and the slogan "Hand-held mobile phones and driving. It's a bad call."

There is also an advisory leaflet issued by the Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions called "Mobile phones and driving". It has been endorsed by the Federation of Communications Services (FCS), the mobile communications industry body, the Association of Chief Police Officers and the Automobile Association.

It provides guidance on hands-free mobile phone use

and advice to employers about how to reduce accident risk for staff. This will be distributed by road safety officers and the police, and to learner drivers through driving instructors.

There are two types of in-car kits which rely on your car's battery for power and charge up the phone at the same time. The simplest plugs into the cigarette lighter socket.

The most complicated is wired directly into the car's electrical system. There will be a microphone, use of a speaker, or existing speakers or earphones, plus a cradle for the telephone.

The kit is usually activated once the car is started. The more expensive systems are wired into the car itself and work in conjunction with the stereo system which is either muted or turned off altogether.

Not all mobile phones have in-car facilities and it is vital to check with manufacturers or look at the specifications in a magazine like *What Mobile?* The cost of installation varies from £120 to almost £400. Often it is cheaper to specify an integrated system with a new

car - the cost will be subsidised. Most manufacturers have some sort of scheme. The Ford Call Programme offers a scheme in which a Motorola D460 is factory fitted and connected to Cellnet for £99. That is good value because buying the phone and having it connected usually costs £129, plus a £329 charge for installation.

However, if you already have a mobile and don't want the complication of an integrated system there are plenty of gadgets being launched every month to keep your hands free.

Banner Twinchoice has a Walk-n-Talk set which plugs straight into your mobile. The headset costs just £17, although some phones will need an adaptor which costs £11.75.

Whilst most hands-free kits consist of an earpiece and microphone, there are alternatives. Pama has produced one with a throat-mounted microphone which picks up the voice rather than an ambient noise.

That makes it perfect for motorcyclists. It won't get in your way if you are wearing a helmet, although you will appear to be wearing a neck-

lace. It costs £29.95 and is available for a wide range of phones. If there is an excuse for driving whilst using a mobile phone, the police have probably heard it. So just in case you wondered the constabulary do stop and probably caution drivers caught with a mobile phone clamped to their ears.

According to Ken Williams, vice chairman of the Association of Chief Police Officers' traffic committee and Chief Constable of Norfolk: "We do not consider specific legislation in relation to the use of mobile phones by drivers is necessary. We already have adequate powers to prosecute."

The maximum fine for not being in complete control of your vehicle is £2,500. Driving without due care and attention can attract a fine of up to £2,500 and between three and nine points on the driving licence. A couple of very good reasons to hang off your feet:

Pama throat microphone from £29.95, 0161 248 1020; Banner Twinchoice Walk-n-Talk, from £17, 0500 121555; Ford Cellular Systems, 0870 6022255.

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MY WORST CAR: SANDY MITCHELL'S RENAULT 4 VAN

My worst and first car was a Renault 4 van which I bought for £150 in my second year of university. It symbolised my first real break from home and a passport to freedom. I was a keen windsurfer at the time and the hole in the roof where a builder would have put his ladders proved ideal for my boards. As a result I spent most of my time in the Renault and I even put a mattress in the back. I remember my friends calling it the passion wagon.

On a good day it made a noise like a hummingbird, but you had to drive it with your foot to the floor to make any decent progress. On one occasion there was a party and I remember my parents disapproving of the company I was keeping, but I went anyway. It involved a long drive, but it was worth it. On the way back I drove in the usual flat out manner, but it ended abruptly when steam spewed out of the bonnet like a whale. The Renault finally caught up with me after months of abuse.

Obviously I wasn't a member of the AA so I had to sort out the problem myself. I opened the bonnet and realised a hose had burst. The only chance I had of repairing it was to take the laces out of my tennis shoes and tie them around the split. I then topped up the radiator with mineral water. Amazingly, the car started and it got me to within four miles



of home when it pattered out on the top of a hill. I thought I might just be able to freewheel the rest of way. But it was a tricky operation because the door shut and it was very difficult to reopen. The inevitable happened and it started to roll away from me and I had to jog alongside until I was almost out of breath before scrambling back in again.

After that incident the Renault did not last very long. The rust was so bad you could see the ground through the footwells and passengers were starting to

get very nervous about travelling with me. Eventually I asked a garage to check the chassis and they said, "What chassis?" I had three decent tyres and they gave me £75 for it. Which wasn't bad considering I'd got a year's worth of motoring out of it. On reflection perhaps it wasn't such a bad car after all.

Sandy Mitchell is Deputy Editor of 'Country Life' and presents a new series of 'Hot Property' on Channel 5 starting on 4 May. He was talking to James Ruppert.





If you want a piece of the New York action, Ian Eichner has a week in a Manhattan apartment that may be right up your street. Photograph: Tom Pilon

A slice of the Apple

An American tycoon has come up with an urban version of timesharing: he is selling stakes in apartments in New York. Jane Slade reports on a novel twist to a tarnished concept

The word "timeshare" still catches at the back of the throat. It smells of hard-sell Eighties-style, of circulars promising free gifts if one attends a "presentation", of rooms in an uncompleted complex and mounting service charges, of two weeks to spend in Majorca - for ever.

Timeshare was once all about buying a fortnight of an apartment in some seaside resort, which you could either use yourself or rent out. The trouble was that everyone wanted to go at the same time - which meant that unless you got in quick you were left with two weeks in February.

As the hundreds of people caught out by commission-hungry salespeople every year will attest, this image is still typical of one end of the market, despite attempts by the timeshare industry to regulate itself. Yet, in typical style, the Americans have hijacked a European idea and made it their own.

Time moves on, and so has timeshare. It is big business in the US, and recently caught the imagination of an American property tycoon. Ian Eichner claims to have redefined "timeshare" as: "One week of a luxurious apartment in the most exciting city in the world, which you can exchange with the same in any one of 85 countries."

Eichner, a fast-talking, high-rise property-developing, rich ex-New York attorney, has just opened the first time-share apartment in New York - and with it coined a new millennium catchphrase: "urban timeshare". Imagine owning 1/52nd of a place just over the road from Carnegie Hall, the bright lights of Broadway, Macy's, Bloomingdale's...

"We are looking to attract a completely different market than the original timeshare concept," Mr Eichner explained at the recent grand opening. "The big downside to conventional timeshare is that it's seasonal - urban timeshare isn't."

Mr Eichner wants to entice companies as well as foreign tourists and businessmen into his luxurious Manhattan lair, as well as anyone who wants a bit of luxury for one week a year in a city that is running short of hotel space. The other huge attraction, particularly for the tourist, is that he can swap his week for another elsewhere in the world through Eichner's link-up with the holiday timeshare exchange company RCI.

So if you would rather spend your week (or part of it) on a beach in Bali, or on the ski slopes of Aspen - you can.

Eichner has spent \$44m converting half of the 26-storey Park Central Hotel in West 56th Street into The Manhattan Club and 253 luxurious timeshare suites. Its location, near Fifth Avenue and Central Park, couldn't be more central for businessmen or pleasure-seekers.

The apartments range from one-bedroom, one-bath suites to two-bed, two-bath suites. Each comes with a fully-equipped kitchenette with dishwasher and microwave, king- or queen-size beds, queen-size sofa-bed, marble bathrooms, fax and computer hook-up capabilities and colour TVs. Owners also get access to a fitness room, meeting rooms, bar area, sauna and massage rooms and business centre. There is also a 24-hour concierge desk, and housekeeping service. Suites per week begin at £8,850 and rise to £40,000 (at an exchange rate of \$1.58 to the £) and are yours to keep, sell, bequeath, and rent in perpetuity. Prices do not include annual maintenance fees, which are currently £350 a year, or each owner's share of electricity and water.

Mr Eichner has 17,000 timeshare weeks for sale, which owners can either use in their entirety or as individual days throughout the year. It is a novel concept to belong not only to an exclusive New York club, but to own a bit of it as well.

Timeshare's selling techniques have changed, too. "We are not interested in the hard sell," he says. "If people are interested, then we can take them on a tour - no busy banker is going to be enticed by a free gift to attend a presentation."

Despite his reassuring words, he admits that the business community is waiting to see it completed before committing itself.

Timeshare is a particularly attractive proposition to older people, with time to choose when they use. Recent statistics show that 37 per cent of timeshare owners in the US are over 55. That is likely to increase with news that Mr Eichner has just bought 12 acres of Florida's south beach to build another timeshare development.

Time will tell whether they will want to buy into his urban timeshare idea. He is also honing his sights on what he calls a "retrofit" in London (developing an existing hotel into timeshare apartments), Paris and Hong Kong.

When you consider that a hotel room off Broadway would cost you nearly £200 a night, and one-bed suites at the Manhattan Club are twice the price of a Manhattan hotel room, you will have covered your timeshare costs in under five years. It is either that or buying a two-bed flat in central Manhattan which will set you back around £280,000...

The Manhattan Club, 200 West 56th Street, New York, New York 10019; tel: 001 212 489 8488; fax: 001 212 541 9766; Website: <http://www.manhattanclub.com>; e-mail: info@manhattanclub.com

Nice home, but they work for it

Fancy living in the grounds of a stately home? Or is a riverside apartment in the city more tempting? Perhaps you own an idyllic retreat, but spend so much time commuting you see little of it. I asked some train-timetable-phobics how they achieved their housing dreams without going on bended knee to the building society.

Breda Blount grew up on the west coast of Ireland. For four years she has lived in a riverside property in London: but has no mortgage. She is landlady of the Morpeth Arms, a "real pub" with an interesting past. Opposite is the "misery stone", where ships loading prisoners bound for Australia moored. Millbank prison was behind the pub, whose cellars would take the overflow of prisoners. "Tourists love being taken down to see the original cells," says Breda.

The pub keeps her busy seven days a week, and living "over the shop" is the only way to do things. But is it hard to separate business from home? "My regulars are my friends. I love this way of life. Even if I won the lottery I'd want to live here," says Breda, who regularly breakfasts in a nearby café for guaranteed peace.

City life affords unusual neighbours, and Breda is friends with curators of the Tate Gallery. "They've just invited me to go and see the Bonnard exhibition." Young's Brewery carries out all maintenance and decoration, leaving Breda with few outings. In return, she tolerates an unusual lodger. "The story goes that a prisoner escaped back into the cellars here and haunts the pub. My barman took a group there and one of them went into a trance and said he was in touch with the ghost." Has Breda heard chains rattling in the night? "The worst thing I've encountered round here is myself."

Ian Turner hears stranger nocturnal noises: "The sound of lions

Prime location, no Tube misery or mortgage hell... so where's the catch? Ginetta Vedrickas on homes that go with the job

roaring and sea lions barking was bad until we got double-glazing." Ian is assistant chief game warden for Longleat safari park, and receives a tied cottage as part of his employment. He has lived on the estate for 21 years.

Originally from Leeds, he lived in Blackpool for a time and finds jungle noises an improvement on his past homes: "I went to Blackpool recently and it was horrendous." He is happy with his lot, despite being permanently on call: "I don't drink. Someone has to be sensible in case the baby giraffes need bottle-feeding in the night."

Ian snorts at the thought of taking on a mortgage, as he doesn't think his pay would stretch that far, but his work has brought another bonus: "That's how I met the wife. She was a coach driver, bringing the sightseers in."

Tied accommodation can be idyllic, but one person's fantasy isn't necessarily another's. Cheryl Risley grew up in Kent, the so-called Garden of England. Despite inheriting a cottage there, Cheryl is now a community worker living on the bleak Gofflinks estate in Southall, and receives a 12-floor flat as part of her work supporting nine tenants with learning difficulties.

Is this a strange choice? "I prefer London. You've got to have your wits about you, but it's more challenging," says Cheryl.

She finds that living among her tenants gives her greater insight into their personalities and problems. "We

live and breathe the same air, there's no hierarchy. If they complain about rubbish or noise, they know that I'm experiencing the same."

Her work is variable. One minute finds her helping to sort out bills; the next she's ringing the DSS, which she does "while running the bath". She is on call for emergencies, and can't easily get away, even when not working: "People tend to slip notes under the door."

Does she ever consider buying? "I might, but I'd worry about subsidence or tenants running off without paying." Cheryl sees many advantages of living on the job, and travelling to and from Rosa Cottage isn't for her. "I commuted into London for a week, and I'd look at men who spend their lives like that, and think, how do you do it?"

No commuting or mortgage payments are obvious advantages, but tied accommodation has a downside: losing your job could also mean losing your home. Ex-servicemen and women receive mandatory "re-settlement advice" when they leave, but are often unprepared for civilian life, according to Cathy Walker, director of welfare for the Soldiers', Sailors' and Airmen's Families Association.

Cathy, herself an Army wife, has lived in married quarters for 20 years, and admits she sometimes "feels twitchy" when thinking about getting a foothold on the housing market, particularly when it is on an upturn. "During your potentially critical years you are standing still."

For those not averse to the occasional twitch, life needn't revolve around mortgages and commuting. Ever lie awake worrying about interest rates and train delays? Find yourself a job with a home included. The only thing to rouse you may be the roar of lions or the clank of chains down in the cellar.



Remote control: pictures like these of London's Tower Bridge area allow flats to be seen tested



The virtual show flat is here

Viewing property has never been easier thanks to CD-Rom technology, writes Mary Wilson

The development sounds great, you fancy buying a flat, but there's a big problem - not a brick has been laid. You can look at plans and mull over models, but all this can never replace actually being able to see what you might be buying.

An answer might be the latest interactive CD-Rom technology used by some house-builders to show you exactly how the apartment will look, right down to fittings, lay-out and, perhaps, even views.

Galliard Homes first used an interactive visualisation system last year for Spice Quay, at Butlers Wharf, near London's Tower Bridge. When this development of 92 flats was launched it was nothing but a car-park. But you could sit in the marketing suite in front of a computer and see seamless moving pictures of what it would look like. You could use the mouse to fly round the building, viewing from several angles, and choose a flat to explore.

Once inside, you could look at floor plans and the actual view from each window. The

panorama down the Thames could be seen in daylight or all lit-up at night - and purchasers clearly liked what they virtually saw, as just nine one-, two- and three-bedroom flats are left for sale, priced from £165,000 to £850,000.

The company is using a similar CD-Rom for 22 penthouses and staircases at the White House development of the old Shell Downstream building in Belvedere Road, Waterloo, where prices will go up to £1.5m.

In Islington, North London, Grove Manor Homes is working on a virtual reality video for the £1.2m penthouse in its Angel on the Green development. "When you do not have a show flat until well into construction, it is a stunning way of showing a purchaser at a very early stage what he can get," says Jeff Duggan, managing director.

Other companies to invest in CD-Roms to help sell their properties are Thirstone and Berkeley Homes (Essex). Thirstone has sent out 2,000 CD-Roms to interested parties in the last eight months.

"As 80 per cent of our developments are sold off-plan, a CD-Rom is an ideal tool to demonstrate the flexibility of a Thirstone Home," says Tony Pidgeley, managing director. Purchasers can choose the colour of the brickwork, the style of windows, the layout of the house, and even the appearance and colour of the drive - and see exactly what they will look like.

Berkeley Homes launched its first interactive CD-Rom last year for four apartment developments in London and has been sending it out instead of a brochure. "Many of our buyers want to reserve homes in advance of the properties being built, and with this we can go several steps forward and provide them with the nearest thing there is to reality," says Julian Lane, the sales and marketing director.

Since the launch of the CD-Rom, the majority of Berkeley's 4,000 enquiries have been for the disc rather than for a printed brochure, and about £10m of property has been sold as a result. "We are hugely excited by

the success of the CD-Rom. Our belief that interactive multimedia would be welcomed by our customers has been completely vindicated," says Steve Bryan, Berkeley's commercial director.

DTZ Debenham Thorpe, a London property agent, has just compiled a CD-Rom for 19 Upper Brook Street, a Georgian mansion in London's Mayfair.

"A recent client who invests heavily in property informed us that he had no time to travel around the world looking for properties to purchase. CD-Roms do not replace personal viewing but they help enhance the marketing tools we are using to sell princely residences," says Peter Stevenette, associate director of DTZ Debenham Thorpe. The property has a £10.5m price-tag.

Spice Quay: 0171-378 0474; The White House: 0171-620 1500; Angel on the Green: 0171-359 5259; Thirstone Homes: 01932 350900; Berkeley Homes, Essex: 01277 222277; DTZ Debenham Thorpe: 0171-405 2749.

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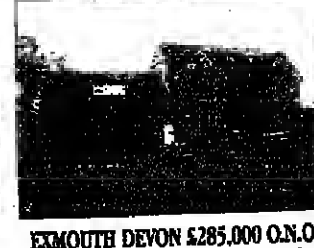
UPPER COLWYN BAY P.O.A.

A quite outstanding detached residence of the highest quality occupying a prime position in one of the sought after residential areas, set in large mature grounds, having a southwesterly aspect at the rear with fine views to the Conwy Mountains and Anglesey.



MALVERN, WORCS. £159,000

A distinctive Grade II listed commercial residence presently trading as an antique shop with sales shop. Office/Utility: Dining room, 3 fast area, kitchen, 2nd floor sitting rm, 2 bedrooms, dressing rm, 2 bathrooms. Small garden to rear.



EXMOUTH DEVON £285,000 O.N.O.

Substantial 6 bedroomed, 2 bathroom detached house. Study, 29ft kitchen-breakfast rm, full size snooker room, 22ft summer room. Private terrace with heated swimming pool, gas c.h. etc.



AXMOUTH £169,000

Spacious accommodation with two dual aspect reception rms, with fire places and fine bow windows, lit with utility/conservatory, two dual aspect double bedrooms, single bedroom with shower, large bathroom, c.h. gardens and ample parking.



LAKE WINDERMERE

A rare opportunity, a beautifully situated detached bungalow with wet dock, boat house and 200 ft of Lake frontage. Set in 4 1/2 acres of wooded grounds there are superb views of the lake and fells. For sale by auction Friday 1st May 1998.



CLOSE TO EXMOOR BORDERS

Attractive detached period cottage with many fine features. 3 bedrooms, one en suite, inglenook fireplace. Large gardens. Garage 27ft x 17ft 6in.



AUGHTON GRANGE £350,000

Presently under construction by Berkeley Homes. A Modern Country House of excellent proportions set within grounds of about 1.5 acres. Rec hall, drawing rm, din rm, family rm, study, farmhouse kitchen, master bedroom suite, guest suite, 3 further bedrooms, family bathroom etc.



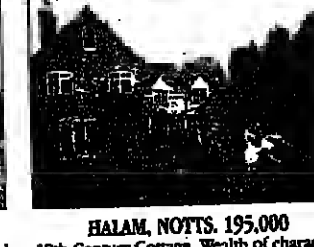
FOREST OF DEAN £235,000

Charming converted coach house in delightful rural setting near Symonds Yat. Spacious 4-bedroom accommodation, extensive gardens, numerous outbuildings.



SLEAFORD, LEICS. £350,000

The house offers extensive family sized accommodation and enjoys the benefits of a superb heated indoor swimming pool which has been constructed in recent years to a high specification and standard. Well regarded small rural village location close to M42.



HALAM, NOTTS. 195,000

19th Century Cottage. Wealth of character. 2 reception rooms, 5 bedrooms, farmhouse kitchen and laundry, 2 bathrooms (1 en suite), attractive cottage garden, conservatory and garage.



DAVENTRY NORTHANTS £235,000

The property has been greatly improved by the present owners with works to include a conservatory, double garage, gas c.h., en suite to the master bedroom, fully fitted kitchen with built-in appliances, large conservatory and mature landscaped gardens.



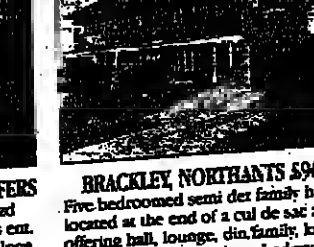
RUGBY, WARWICKSHIRE £154,000

Traditional style detached house - 4 bedrooms, 2 reception rooms, breakfast kitchen, conservatory gas central heating, leaded light windows garage, private rear garden.



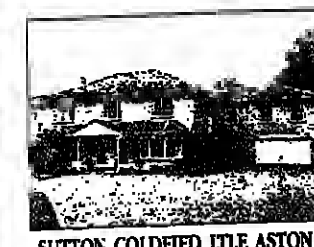
WOLVERHAMPTON £199,500 OFFERS

Det character residence. UPVC double glazed windows. En. porch, spacious en. hall with attractive staircase, 24ft dia. loggia, 18ft dia. brick en. kitchen, cloakroom, gallery landing, 5 bed, + 6 bed/office, bathroom, pge, store, workshop, greenhouse.



BRACKLEY NORTHANTS £96,950

Five bedroomed semi det family house, located at the end of a cul de sac and offering hall, lounge, din, family, kitchen, ground floor cloakroom, bedrooms, and two bathrooms, on the first floor, gas radiators, single garage and gains in front and rear.



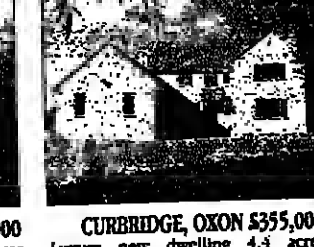
SUTTON COLDFIELD LIT. ASTON PK

Excellent situated, immaculate freehold detached family residence. 5 bedrooms, 3 bathrooms, 3 reception rooms, luxury breakfast kitchen, double garage, attractive garden. £425,000. (Birmingham 8 miles).



WALSALL, WEST MIDLANDS £345,000

Vastly built, impressive L shaped rec hall, large guests cloakroom with sep wc, 3 superb rec rms, space to first floor, extensive lift, inner hall with Butler's pantry, 1st floor landing with 4 bedrooms, nursery and en suite shower rm, family bathroom, sep wc. 2nd floor with 3 double rms, 1 single rm and family bathroom, etc.



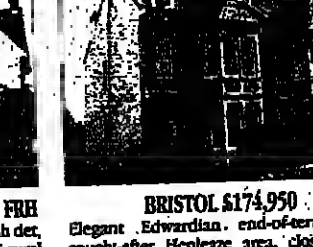
CURBRIDGE, OXON £355,000

Luxury new dwelling 4 1/2 acres. A substantial new det house on the outskirts of Curbridge village just two miles from Witney. 5 bedrooms, 3 en suite, family bathroom with shower, 4 recs, superb kitchen, utility, cloakroom, oil ch, double glazing, double garage, overall 4 1/2 acres overlooking open countryside. NHBC Guarantee.



RURBENHALL, WARCS £238,500 FREE

Royal Leamington Spa. 5 mins A stylish det, family residence, occupying a semi-rural position and standing in grounds of about 1/3 of an acre. 2 rec rms, bilco, utility, 4 bedrooms, master bedroom, en suite shower rm, principal bathroom, 2-car garage, cash gen.



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North Wales. Opp. to acquire an individual 4 bedroom, det bungalow set in about 6 acres of grazing commanding panoramic views over hills to the sea, together with an excellent boarding kennel and stabling facilities. Good range of outbuilds, grangling, and visitors parking, ch. £325,000.



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مكاتب الأجريل

Turn a squat into a palace

Why would you want to buy a council property - your own or someone else's? Ginetta Vedrickas investigates

An auction by Andrews & Robertson recently featured several properties owned by the London Borough of Lambeth. Among them was a four-floor Georgian house in Camberwell that, at a guide price of £160,000, seems a bargain.

Before you scour auction rooms for future bargains, be aware that the eventual buyers of this property, and others like it, may need many more cheques to restore their outstanding homes to their former glory.

A number of the Lambeth properties were plagued by rather more than the odd bit of rising damp - they were lived in by squatters; getting them to leave can be both time-consuming and expensive.

Sadly, council coffers can't stretch to the restoration and a Lewisham spokesperson says: "We've got a large number of properties which are too expensive for us to refurbish and let so they're a drain on our finances."

Lack of investment and a persistent decline in housing stock forces local authorities to sell in order to concentrate on repairing viable existing stock. But is it worth buying council properties, and how easy are they to sell?

When Michelle Cox bought her house on the Bullmoor Lane Estate, in Enfield, she couldn't have imagined she would appear on national television representing 11 freeholders on the mainly council-owned estate. "Everything was fine until 1995 when we got letters telling us not to worry if we saw men with clipboards as they were doing a survey."

Michelle did not worry until she was invited to a residents' "information display" in October 1996. "The council said that because of structural defects they were considering refurbishment or demolition. When we asked about our position the council said, 'What freeholders? We realised they hadn't considered us'."

According to Michelle, the council backtracked and denied the problem was major, so she formed a freeholders' committee, investigated and discovered "a hell of a lot of problems" with the Bison-bull estate. "I've turned into a sad person. The library know me well as I'm always ordering books about structural defects. But if I can find all this out why couldn't the council?"

Michelle wants the council to admit it should have known about the defects from Department of Environment and Association of Metropolitan Authorities reports which warned of problems with this type of construction.

How does she feel about her home now? "Disgusted. We're struggling to pay the mortgage on a worthless house," says Michelle, who faces a £12,000 bill and homelessness while repairs are done. Michelle dismisses any chance of selling: "Who'd give a mortgage on this place?"

Since Right to Buy legislation of the 1980s, many council tenants made the transition from rental to private ownership. Huge discounts gave buyers high profits on resale while others faltered because enormous service charges made it difficult to buy and sell.

The 10-year protection from charges given to original buyers in the Eighties boom has now expired and current buyers may find themselves vulnerable.

Dave Padfield, housing advisor for Tower Hamlets, in London, sees "marginal homeowners" struggling because they haven't fully considered the financial implications of estate improvements: "You get people who should never have bought who can just about manage until there's a window replacement scheme which could cost £4,000." Homeowners have some autonomy over improvements, council leaseholders do not. Non-estate property may



Serving notice: councils are selling off scores of squatted properties

prove more straightforward. Tim and Cathy Brown bought their Cambridgeshire farmhouse in 1994. Their specific requirement was land for themselves, son Sam and their six whippets.

"There were few houses that fitted the bill because many country houses have pocket handkerchief gardens," says Tim, whose home is set in one-and-a-half acres. While the land was unusual so was the owner: Cambridgeshire County Council was selling be-

cause the tenants had died and the small farm was no longer economically viable.

The Browns bought under sealed bid at an auction and, keen gardeners, concentrated on exteriors for the first few years. They can't build garden-type buildings as they must retain the agricultural nature of the surrounding land. But they have created a formal garden from scratch, punting in hedges to stop the wind from sweeping across and adding seclusion.

Tim believes they chose wisely: "They've built 'executive homes' down the road which are enormous but they're cheek by jowl and you can see into neighbours' windows."

The "unassuming" house is now unrecognisable and is 60 per cent larger thanks to an extension. A recent valuation by a local agent shows that its value has significantly increased.

Privacy is not usually a feature of council housing but Tim and Cathy's home proves that estate doesn't have to be the urban variety. Tim says: "An unusual home is worth buying regardless of its previous owner."

The Browns found their dream home but others are not so lucky. An explosion in Kensington's Kew Point extensively damaged the building and after many heated committee meetings Lambeth have decided to demolish it. And the three freeholders in the block? "The council will fully recompense them," says a spokesperson.

Explosions can happen to any building but holding a local authority lease brings added complications leaving buyers vulnerable to the vagaries of council procedures.

On sale for £115,000 through Hamptons Dulwich branch is a three-bedroom double-fronted property on the village outskirts while a two-bed flat nearby is valued at £117,000. No prizes for spotting the former council house.

Negotiator Carl Davenport believes the house is good value because of its proximity to good schools and city train services but must be work harder to sell it? "There is stigma. Some clients refuse outright to go and look but people should take each property on its own merits," says Carl, who has experienced lenders' reluctance to lend on council flats. He advises: "Leave yourselves extra time for the purchase as you may have to find a more sympathetic lender."

When questioned, most building societies deny discriminating against local authority stock but buyers of flats in tower blocks should clarify company policy before going ahead. The Woolwich does not lend on flats above the seventh floor while Bradford & Bingley stop at the fifth. Shop around and the sky may be your limit.

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Look before you leap abroad

An overseas assignment is the perk of perks. But do some homework before you rush to pack your bags, Robert Liebman suggests

Ah, France. A cultured nation whose people know their wine, love good food – and, when they vacate properties, take the toilet seats with them.

So says Judy Braham, Paris-based managing director of Executive Relocations France, who notes that most British expats are unprepared for the quirky realities of daily French life: "Homes and apartments here are very small, most are unfurnished, and when they are furnished, the furniture is usually very low quality. And they take everything when they move: toilets seats, cupboards, fridges, stoves, the lot."

The culprits are not dastardly French landlords but ordinary occupiers: "The tenants take them. It's the French way," says Ms Braham, in heavily accented English. She hails from New Zealand.

Caroline Jury, a senior finance lawyer and partner in the Frankfurt office of London solicitors Clifford Chance, eagerly agreed to live and work abroad – twice. "I joined Clifford Chance in London with the idea of working abroad, and I was seconded as a 'firefighter' to Amsterdam for a few months," says Ms Jury. "When I returned home, the UK seemed strange to me. Then the Frankfurt office approached me."

Language was not much of a barrier for Ms Jury, but cultural differences are less easily bridged: "Anglo-Saxons are proactive and Germans are reactive, so some of my business dealings can be frustrating," she admits. Mostly, however, she relishes the worklife of an expat because "there is a different approach to law, hence more interesting. I am learning all the time."

Frankfurt itself is "a little soulless but very pleasant and offering a good quality of life with great housing that is better quality for money than London. A lot of people work in Frankfurt during the week and go home on Friday, so it is quiet on weekends. Being in the centre of Europe, Frankfurt is very convenient," she finds.

Before she left the UK for Germany, her employer eased the transition by organising many aspects of the relocation. Companies lacking in-house relocation expertise can turn to companies like Hambro for a "full relocation service," according to global business manager Clare Harrison. "We bring expats into and out of foreign countries. We can help find housing and schools, and prepare people for life in their new country. We explain cultural differences, and they may ask us, for example, how to behave at a dinner party." For couples, Hambro also provides "partner support".

Hambro assigns an advisor here and also in the destination country. "You are always working with at least two people, and we provide ongoing assignment support," says Ms Harrison. The destination adviser stays on the

scene even after the expat has settled in. "There is always someone you can turn to for help or advice," she says.

For certain destinations, Hambro also provides comprehensive health advice and can also bring in specialist security consultants. Such relocation consultation is not exactly cheap but bypassing it altogether can be more costly long-term: "If a relocation fails and you have to bring someone back and send someone else out, those costs are phenomenal. Our costs are very small compared to the hidden costs of a failed assignment," she says.

Relocating employees are more likely to settle in successfully if they can see and judge things in advance for themselves. To that end, companies like Executive Relocations offer familiarisation tours: "We provide information that is specific to the city they are moving to," says Ms Braham, who was herself an expat in London before founding her company in Paris a decade ago. "For the majority of our clients, we drive around with them, showing them apartments in various neighbourhoods. We also explain things like shopping and transport." Work permits, visas, social security details and the names of, for example, bilingual doctors are also part of the service.

Although the brochure is silent on one specific, Executive Relocations can also recommend shops which sell assiettes de toilette.

Most Britons relocate to an EU country or America, where the biggest threats to health arise more from glut-ton than guns. The risks in many tropical and developing countries, however, should not be overlooked or minimised.

"Anyone going to an exotic location should get appropriate medical advice," says Dr Peter Barnett, senior medical advisor to MASTA, Medical Advisory Services to Travellers Abroad. "In 1996, a total of 2,500 cases of malaria were imported into the UK, with 10 deaths, and they were all theoretically avoidable."

Based in the London School of Tropical Medicine, MASTA monitors the full panoply of travel-medicine developments, such as mosquito resistance to anti-malarials. Travel medicine is a speciality, and MASTA is considerably more authoritative and up-to-date than the average GP. MASTA provides travel briefs, telephone helplines, jabs and mosquito nets, among other things.

Toilet seats in French are really siège des cabinets. And hangovers, not hepatitis, are the greater danger to most British expats.

Executive Relocations France, 30 rue de Lubeck, 75116 Paris, France, tel. 00-33-1 47 55 60 29; Hambro Countrywide Relocation, PO Box 6246, Basingstoke, Hampshire, RG24 8BX, tel. 01256 708484; MASTA, tel. 0171 631 4408.



Chic galore – but Paris homes are very small, warns expat Judy Braham, above

Photograph: Alastair Miller

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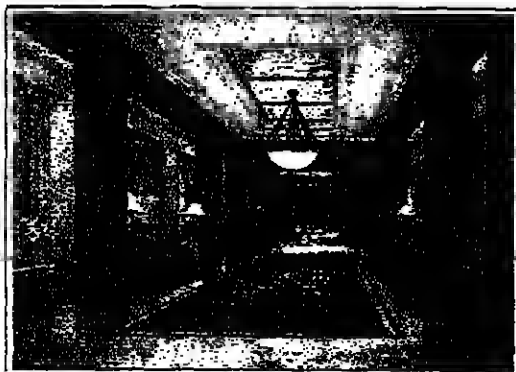
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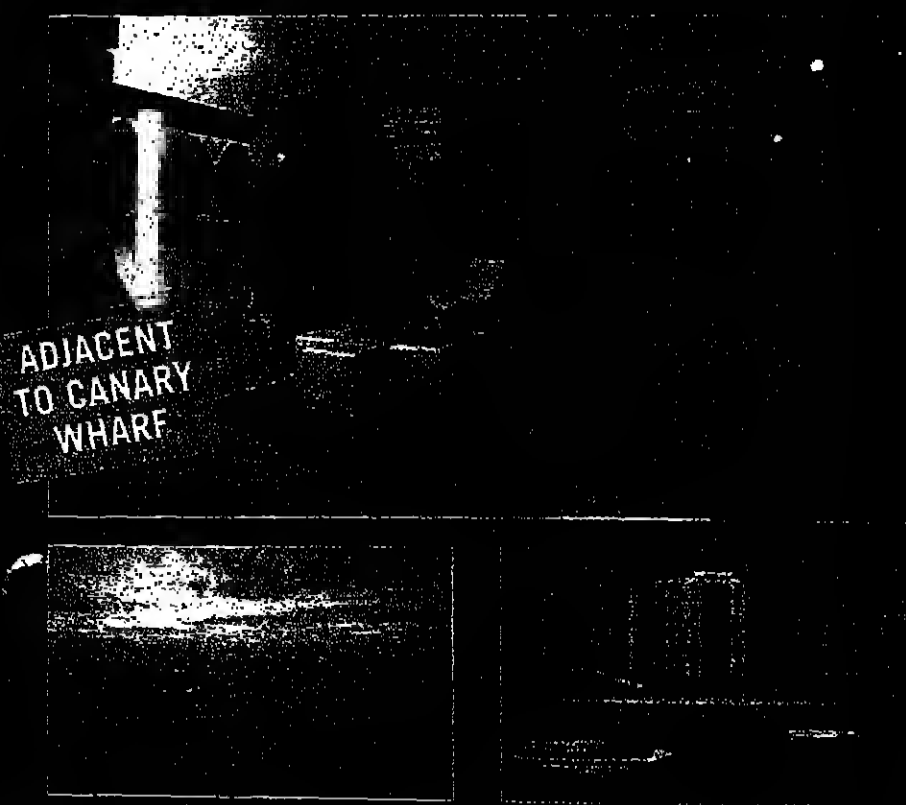
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